

Little Milton Parish Council
Minutes of Council Meeting held on Wednesday 10th March 2021

Present:

Cllr. Francois Van Der Merwe (Chairman)
Cllr. David Wakeling
Cllr. Steve Sidhu
Cllr. Howard Harrison
Cllr. Adam Sheppard

District Councillor: Caroline Newton (Part Meeting)

Mr Raymond Fergusson (*Parish Clerk*)
Member of the public: Two (Part Meeting)

01/03/21 Regulating the Conduct of the Meeting

The meeting was being conducted under THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE AND CRIME PANELS (CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETINGS) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2020. These Regulations allowed Parish Councils to conduct their meeting by video or audio link with Councillors and members of the Public and Press not being in the same location.

02/03/21 Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Alaric Smith, County Councillor Stephen Harrod

03/03/21 Declaration of any pecuniary interests of members

There were no pecuniary interests declared.

The Chairman welcomed Andrea Oughton to the Council meeting. He explained that Andrea had already had a remote meeting with himself, Cllr. Steve Sidhu and Cllr. Alaric Smith in respect of the recruitment to replace the current Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer. Andrea was introduced to the other Councillors and she highlighted her role as Parish Clerk/RFO for Great Haseley Parish Council and her role within the Thame Town Council.

04/03/21 Approval of Minutes

The Parish Council **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on 10th February 2021 as a true record of the meeting. The minutes will be signed by the Chairman outside the meeting.

05/03/21 Planning

P20/S4875/LB: Hillview Cottage High Street:

Create a work from home space in the existing stone outbuilding. Replacing one door with a secure cottage style external door & introducing two wooden windows in keeping with the house

The Council noted that the South Oxfordshire District Council had **GRANTED** Listing Building Consent

06/03/21 Meeting with representatives of OCC Highways/SODC Planning re A329

The Chairman confirmed that a remote meeting had been arranged for Thursday 11th March with representatives of OCC Highways and SODC Planning to continue the discussion on the unsatisfactory application of the LTP4 2015-2031 Freight Strategy in respect of a weight limit on A329 between Junction 7 of the M40 and Stadhampton and the traffic mitigation strategy included in the Outline Planning Application for Chalgrove Airfield. The Council spend some time considering the key points that they considered important to achieve a weight limit on the A329 through Little Milton. All councillors present indicated that they would join the remote meeting.

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07/03/21 Matters arising

Re-siting of litter bin

The Clerk reported that the matter was still under consideration by South Oxfordshire District Council.

08/03/21 Recreation Ground/Playground

The Chairman invited Cllr. David Wakeling to report on the recent operational inspection of the playground by Kompan. He reported that the style of the report was very similar to the annual report submitted by The Play Inspection Company. In general terms he felt that there had been very few actions taken during the inspection. The Council **RESOLVED** that it would defer any decision to have any further operational inspections by Kompan until after the annual inspection in July/August by The Play Inspection Company. The Clerk was asked to communicate this to Kompan. During the discussion Cllr. Adam Sheppard stated that he would liaise with Cllr. David Wakeling to deliver bark to the playground to top up the areas around the slide. Cllr. David Wakeling highlighted that the existing fencing around the playground would need replaced in the next two years as it was not renewed within the playground project.

The Clerk reported that Cllr. Steve Sidhu had informed him that the quotation he was pursuing in respect of the hard-standing for the Grundon Bins was not competitive to that already received from Monument Pools. Cllr. Adam Sheppard informed the Council that he was meeting a contractor on site on Saturday 13th March and expected to have a quotation for the hard standing. He also reported that he would obtain a quotation in respect of the work needed to address the poor drainage behind the pedestrian gate entrance into the recreation ground.

09/03/21 Report by District /County Councillor

The Chairman welcomed District Councillor Newton to the meeting

Caroline commented upon the recent letter received from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in respect of the Outline Planning Application for Chalgrove Airfield. The letter raised a number of concerns that challenged the suitability of the site for housing and a new runway. She stated that she was meeting with Officers to review the implications on the application.

Caroline reported that South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are looking into the possibility of developing a joint Local Plan for the area to significantly reduce costs and help the councils meet their ambitious targets for making the two districts carbon neutral.

Caroline informed the Council that South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse are the second and third best recyclers in England. South Oxfordshire recycles 64 per cent of its waste, with the Vale recycling 63.3 per cent

Caroline reported that Stadhampton Parish Council had shared a meeting with OCC Highways Officers in respect of the future plans for infra-structure development arising from the OCC Growth Fund as well as the Homes England proposals for Chalgrove and suggested that this might emerge in the scheduled meeting with OCC Highways on 11th March.

The Clerk thanked Caroline for her support in having the trailer removed from the layby at Frogmore. The Clerk stated that the problem at the layby in respect of litter and fly-tipping warranted a visit by OCC and SODC Officers to explore a more cost effective solution.

Caroline reported that the elections for the County Council are scheduled for May 6th 2021 and that the Elections team is always looking for new people to work with them.

The Chairman thanked Caroline for attending the meeting and she left the meeting.

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10/03/21 MUGA

The Chairman reported on the site meetings he had with En Tout Cas (ETC) and Chiltern Sports Contractors in respect of the MUGA. The feedback from both contractors was that the surface on the hard court and the carpet court were in a poor state and the Council should be looking to replace them. The outline cost was £35k. The Chairman expressed the view that there might be some short term measures that could be taken but the Council needed to address the replacement of the surfaces.

The Council had a lengthy discussion on possible options that could be considered for the existing facilities but also for other potential facilities within the recreation ground. Cllr. David Wakeling shared his experiences of the replacement of the Playground in 2018.

The Chairman stated that the setting up of a Working Party to scope the project and to identify potential sources of funding was essential although an earlier approach to the village had not received any response. He believed that the interest in the tennis club could generate support for the project although there was a need to approach the village again.

Mark Willis was invited to comment on the discussion as he had been on the recreation ground committee for many years. Mark commented on the overall aging of the MUGA as well as the general condition of the grass surface that had benefitted from a weed & feed some years ago.

11/03/21 Finance

Approval of Council expenditure

Colourplus: March Newsletter 2021	£229.06
Raymond Fergusson: Month 12 2020-21, Clerk/Editor salary	£214.68
Raymond Fergusson: Council expenses October – March 2021	£32.23
Kompan: in depth operational inspection	£190.40

Direct Debit

Intuit: Accounting software March 9th – April 9th 2021	£12.00
Intuit: Accounting software February 17 th – March 9 th 2021	
Credit issued and refund received re reduction in monthly charge	(£8.58)

The Clerk informed the Council that he had received notice from Smith of Derby that the maintenance of the church clock was due for renewal. The Council **RESOLVED** to renew the maintenance contract for the three years to March 2024 at a cost of £565 excl. VAT

The Clerk reported that the bank statements at 4th March 2021 had been reconciled with the ledger at 10th March 2021 and were available for viewing on Quickbooks.

The Clerk reported that the estimate of the reserves at 31st March 2021 showed an increase of £1372 from the forecast in January 2021. The closing General Reserves at 31st March 2021 were now forecast at £19,478

The Chairman informed the Council that the Clerk had produced a schedule detailing the effectiveness of internal control and risk management. The Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the Schedule for 2020-21. The Clerk stated that the process was dynamic during the year.

The Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Mr Ian Dennis as Internal Auditor. The Clerk indicated that Mr Dennis had already indicated his willingness to carry on in the role

12/03/21 Thames Water/OCC Highways

The Clerk informed the Council that he had received a comprehensive response from Thames Water in respect of his email of 19th February 2021 that he had circulated it to all Councillors. The response addressed the frequency of tankers attending the sewage pumping station (SPS) that was due to the ingress of ground/surface water infiltrating the foul sewer network that is only designed to take domestic foul waste. This has been a historic problem. Thames Water commented that they did not envisage infrastructure concerns associated with the possible

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developments in Little Milton. Thames Water will continue to investigate and attempt to identify the root cause to the capacity restrictions on the sewerage network as a result of the ingress of water.

The Council **RESOLVED** that the Clerk should arrange a meeting with Thames Water as they considered it very beneficial to maintain an ongoing dialogue with them.

13/03/21 Community Infra-Structure Levy (CIL)

The Clerk advised the Council that it would be in receipt of CIL if housing developments progress in the village. He made reference to the Made Neighbourhood Development Plan that contains a statement in respect of CIL outlining the need for the Council to publish a list of projects and estimated costs. The Clerk stated that South Oxfordshire District Council provide guidance on the range of infrastructure that CIL funds can be used for and highlighted that as the Council had the General Power of Competence it gave them more flexibility.

The Council **RESOLVED** to consider the implications of addressing the assessment of projects that could be funded by CIL

14/03/21 Casual vacancy on Parish Council

The Clerk detailed the process that is applicable on the receipt of a resignation by a Councillor to the Chairman. He outlined that there were two distinct steps

- Advertisement of the vacancy to allow electors the opportunity to request an election. There is a period of fourteen days for ten electors to request an election and is a legal requirement
- If no election is requested the Council can seek to fill the vacancy by co-option

The Clerk stated that the vacancy and co-option notice would require to be published in the newsletter and that this would be over two consecutive months to allow the maximum notice to the village.

15/03/21 Correspondence

The Chairman informed the Council that he had received an email from Ian & Des at The Lamb informing the Council that they had taken stock of their situation in what had been a testing year and had decided to look at the possibility of selling the pub. They had informed the Council as part of an agreement with the Parish Council in 2014 not to register the Lamb as an Asset of Community Value. The Council appreciated being informed.

The Clerk reported that he had been informed that one of the spars on the bench adjacent to the Council notice board had become dislodged. The parishioner had raised concerns about the safety of the other benches in the village. Cllr. Howard Harrison offered to inspect the benches and report back the Council at the April meeting.

16/03/21 Annual Parish Meeting

The Clerk informed the meeting that the current legislation covering the ability of the Parish Council to hold a remote meeting lapses on the 6th May 2021. It is unclear as to whether it will be extended. Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils are suggesting that the Annual Parish Meeting held between 1st March and 1st June should be held before the expiry of the current legislation. The Council **RESOLVED** that it would keep the matter under review.

17/03/21 Recruitment of Parish Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

The Chairman thanked Andrea for attending the Council meeting and suggested that she left the meeting before the Council considered her application for the role. Andrea appreciated the request and logged off from the remote meeting.

The Chairman reported that Cllr. Steve Sidhu, Cllr Alaric Smith and himself had conducted a remote meeting with Andrea in respect of the recruitment of the Parish Clerk/Responsible

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Financial Officer. He reported that it had been a satisfactory meeting and subject to finalising the details of the Basic Terms and Conditions they were recommending that Andrea should be formally offered the position. The Council **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation. It was agreed that Cllr. Steve Sidhu would finalise the offer to reflect that the method of remuneration during the probationary period would be on an hourly basis before changing to a monthly payment based on annual hours.

The Council discussed the arrangements for the handover to the new clerk. Raymond was invited to state what he felt was the most appropriate arrangements for both parties. Raymond stated that the appointment of the new clerk should transfer the responsibilities of the role at the date of appointment and that he would provide any advice/support to the new clerk. Raymond would not continue to be an employee of the Council but his services if appropriate could be rewarded on a consultancy basis. Subject to the acceptance of an offer Raymond would liaise with the new Clerk to ensure a smooth transition. The Council **RESOLVED** to accept Raymond's proposal.

The Clerk reported that he had sent two publications; A Good Councillor Guide and The Essential Clerk, to the Council members. The publications set the operating framework of the Council and the roles of Councillors and the Clerk. He stated that this was a good starting point before the Council reviewed any changes as to how the Council would operate after the appointment of a new clerk

18/03/21 Exchange of Information

Cllr. David Wakeling expressed his concerns about ongoing issues with the layby at Frogmore that had already been raised earlier in the meeting.

19/03/21 Date of Next Meeting

The Parish Council will convene at **8.00 p.m.** on **Wednesday 14th April 2021 under the new Regulations unless otherwise advised**

The meeting finished at 10.21 p.m.

Parish Forum

There were no matters raised

Signed by:

Chairman.....Date.....