

**MINUTES OF QUENDON & RICKLING PARISH COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 7.30 PM. BY ZOOM ONLINE.**

Present: Sally Kitcat – Chairman (SK)
Carrie Williams – (CW)
Ted Crow – (TC)
Tom Duncan – (TDN)
Ele Stoneham (ES)
Katherine Nuthall (KN)
Tony Dear (TD)

Keith Williams – (KW) (Parish Clerk)

677. Declarations of Interest

None.

678. Apologies for Absence

Neil Hargreaves (NH)- District Councillor
Ray Gooding (RG) – (County Councillor)

679. Minutes of the last meeting held on 8th July 2020 and Extraordinary Meeting on 12th August 2020 (already circulated)

The minutes of the last meetings held on 8th July and 12th August 2020 were agreed as true and accurate records.

680. Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 10th June 2020

See reference to Bowls Club response under Correspondence.

681. Public participation session

None

682. Finance

a. Accounts balances (already circulated).

Noted.

b. Invoices and payments for approval.

Approved.

FINANCE REPORT for AUGUST 2020

Balance at 31/07/2020	Lloyds Bank	46009.35
Football pitch income		300.00
Total Lloyds bank		46309.35
Unity Trust Bank		500.00
Total		46809.35

Payments to be authorised for August 2020

Payee	Chq No	Amount	Reason
e-on	dd	58.30	Electricity for July 2020
Payroo	online	6.00	Payroll expenses
Sally Kitcat	online	197.01	Purchase of games
McAfee (Keith Williams)	online	89.99	Renewal of anti-virus software
Keith Williams	online	343.72	Clerk salary for August 2020
HMRC (Keith Williams)	online	85.80	PAYE August 2020
Total Payments		780.82	

Balance c/f @ 31/08/20	Unity Trust	46,028.53
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Please note: The payments to McAfee and HMRC were made by the parish clerk and are being reimbursed.

c. Salary increase for Parish Clerk

The new recommended salary rates were approved.

d. PC Assets list

It is recognised that the current list of Parish Council assets is out of date and needs to be reviewed. This will be carried out.

e. Unity Bank

The new account is now up and running.

f. **Insurance**

It was noted that Public Liability cover in the council's insurance policy extends only to items own by the Parish Council.

683. Correspondence

- A request for a donation has been received from Herts and Essex Air Ambulance. This was declined.
- Widdington Pit. The opening hours for the pit are 07.00 – 18.30 Monday to Friday. Arrival of lorries as early as 06.00 is causing unacceptable noise. Efforts are being made to restrict arrivals to the official opening time.
- New defibrillator pads have been requested. Purchase has been approved, to be funded by the Parish Council.
- A letter has been received from the Bowls Club confirming the new carpet has been ordered and is due to be fitted shortly.. The parish clerk is to send a donation form to the Club.
- The parish clerk is to send another donation form to the Rickling Ramblers so they can adjust their request.

684. Planning

UTT/20/2019/HHF and 2020/LB – Thatch End, Rickling Green Road.

Demolition of existing rear extension and erection of new single storey rear extension.

[Response being compiled].

685. Broadband

TDN updated the meeting on the state of broadband provision for the new builds on Cambridge Road.

- Bluebell Drive, Oxlip Close and Snowdrop Road are to be covered by SuperfastEssex by March 2021.
- Ventnor Road is planned to be covered commercially by Openreach. Still no date available but SuperfastEssex team is following up with Openreach.
- The Foxley 2 Developer has its own arrangement for coverage by Gigaclear.

686. B1383

a) Quendon Trees

The Council has been given the choice of five trees to replace the replacement trees that died. The dead samplings have been removed. Field maple has been requested as the preferred choice and confirmation is awaited.

b) Highways Survey

- KN advised feedback has been positive
- Highway survey has been submitted to Essex Highways. Rissa Long states the survey is awaiting validation from Essex Highway Engineers where it will then be given consideration in the budget meetings (January, March) next year
- Some survey feedback mentioned the installation of average speed cameras. KN contacted Dave Hodgson the Mayor of Bedford Borough for their views as they have installed several on rural roads within their borough.
- Community Speed Watch team is currently not operating due to COVID
- County Councillor Ray Gooding has agreed the 40mph Buffer Zone south of Quendon.

c) Essex Forest Tree initiative

Details of this initiative have been circulated to councillors. It was noted that trees can only be planted on land owned by the Parish Council. The parish clerk is to contact Essex County Council to register the Parish Council's interest in hedging for footpaths.

The speed sign outside Foxley 2 is missing. Stonebond has a new sign but not the appropriate post. They have been trying to obtain the post from Highways but so far without success. SK will contact Rissa Long to try to expedite matters.

687. Facebook

For people to reference the QRPC Facebook page it is necessary to register as a "Friend", which some users object to as this reveals personal details of the user. This can be avoided if QRPC registers as a "Group". It was agreed therefore that QRPC should register as a Group.

688. Sporting events – football/cricket

There had been many events during the Summer. TC advised that there had been 14 football matches in August alone.

689. Events – Autumn Daze

It is unlikely that this could go ahead due to the new limits on the number of people allowed to congregate. It was therefore agreed to cancel the event. TDN said the apple press could still be made available but that any user would be responsible for sanitising after use.

690. Neighbourhood Watch

As there has still been little response, KN suggested that the council should promote it on the Q&R Community WhatsApp Group and keep everyone informed on this medium if something happens in the villages.

691. Strutt and Parker

It was agreed that under current Covid-19 regulations it would not be possible at this time for a presentation to be made by Strutt and Parker. SK will advise accordingly.

692. The Cricketers Arms

The Eat Out to Help Out initiative had been very successful. A new manager is now in place.

693. Defibrillator signs

It was agreed that Andrew Thomson should order new signs when ordering the new pads.

694. County and District Councillor reports

Neil Hargreaves (District Councillor)

Report submitted – see Appendix 1.

Ray Gooding (County Councillor)

Report submitted – see Appendix 2.

695. Date of next meeting

14th October 2020.

696. Closure of meeting

There being no further items to be discussed, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20.50.

[143/2020]

Appendix 1.

Report from District Councillor Neil Hargreaves

The three big stories are the proposals from the government to

- Designate areas for development where the granting of outline planning permission will be automatic, and many other changes
- Increase the new housing requirement on Uttlesford from 14,000 to about 22,000 houses
- Abolish county and district councils and replace them with mid-sized 'unitary' councils, but with an elected mayor at county level (despite the county not existing anymore)

Local government proposals

A White Paper is awaited but the proposals are said to be partly to reduce costs. The proposal for Essex is to split it into three authorities which would cover all functions. This would presumably mean splitting all the Essex functions such as highways, education, social care, libraries and waste disposal into three. This must surely increase costs not decrease them. (Concerning waste disposal, although UDC collects it, it is transferred to Essex at a site near Dunmow and the recycling is done elsewhere by the county).

To put this in perspective most of the local authority costs are County. UDC's precept is only about 9% of the total council tax, and the vast range of UDC council services cost tax payers about £140 per person per year. As our commercial investment strategy builds up, the cost to tax payers will fall to about £104 per person a year. The Essex precept is 72% of the total and the other 19% is fire, police and parish.

There would also be an elected Essex mayor, and a mayoral department with the power to have a council tax precept to fund itself, despite Essex County Council no longer existing. So, the reorganisation would not even remove a governance layer. If say the three councils were under Labour, Conservative and independent control respectively, and all taking different views, there would not even be a coherent political structure. The removal of district councils would also reduce local accountability. Each councillor would need to cover a much wider area, and being in a much larger council would have less influence. Local residents groups like R4U without a national footprint probably could not run a council and the change would certainly concentrate power with Labour or the Conservatives to the exclusion of smaller groups. R4U's deputy leader raised this in a meeting with the minister and he declined to discuss it. The reduction in the number of councillors per resident would increase workload. I can't see it being particularly attractive to be a councillor with a responsibility for everything, having to go say to Harlow for council meetings and be in a minority in a large council controlled by one of the two big parties, and probably having to deal with decisions on matters irrelevant to here.

The current structure was set up nearly 50 years ago. Any mass reorganisation would be very costly and disruptive and difficult to manage. I have worked on take overs and an amalgamation of two large companies. This however, would be integrating not just two entities, but several district councils into one and adding a third of a county council (in disarray) on top, and a mayoralty on top of that. The IT implications of this alone are eye wateringly complex. In a business you have the advantage of executive power to mandate decisions, but in the local authority world life is more complex with the officers reporting to a chief executive, and a separate political structure headed by a council leader, and with each party having its own leader.

The financial implications are also complex. The tax take per head varies widely across the county and Uttlesford is the largest. And as we continue to build our commercial investments, we will shortly have a major part our services funded from this income rather than from taxation. I'm not sure we would be happy, having worked hard to set all this up, to have the assets and income handed over. Nor should local taxpayers be required to have responsibility for any legacy financial issues which may exist in other authorities.

I think local authorities, despite years of funding cuts, have handled the tasks and responsibilities for covid much better than some government ministries (except the Treasury). A government that has not yet resolved Brexit, or any other trade deals, has to address global warming, and coronavirus and the eye-watering government debt, which may end up triggering the break-up of the Union, and couldn't even deal reasonably with exam results, needs to sort itself out before casting around elsewhere.

This does however raise the issue of the urgently needed reform of Essex County Council. Although some parts may run efficiently my view is we are ill-served on highways (projects, maintenance and planning responses) and education (provision of places, and school transport –not issues for particularly for Newport, but very much so across the district). Even things like the proposed library closures were handled in a particularly

unimaginative way, with a narrow, pre-determining, consultation document, and resulted in an FOI request to get omitted basic cost information, and eventually a complete climb down.

I noted above that UDC provides a very large range of services. Many are not obvious such as being the Port Authority for Stansted Airport, and thus dealing with Brexit changes, or being the authority which could need to attend at an exhumation. I am guessing these government proposals will in the end get buried, but in the meantime they are consuming valuable senior officer time.

UDC finances and covid funding

UDC will need to agree a revised budget for the remainder of the year because of reductions in various incomes. Some extra funding has been received from the government, and the good news is the commercial investment strategy has continued at full pace despite covid, thus bringing in extra revenues this year which were not anticipated until future years. So the books remain balanced, but the mix of costs and revenues will be somewhat different from that anticipated in the council's budget

A whole raft of extra tasks has been completed on behalf of the government and some of these continue. UDC as the end of August has paid out £18.6m to 1,550 small businesses across the district and those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector. Additionally, £938k has been paid in discretionary grants to 126 businesses. The story for council housing is not as good, because on becoming vacant the houses are stripped and cleaned and heavy maintenance work done if needed. This has not been possible on the scale needed and so houses have not been returned to use at the normal speed, which also impacts UDC housing finances as no rent is received while empty

Proposed changes to the planning system

These have been widely publicised so not dealt with in detail here. Their consequences would be far reaching and damaging. These also seem not to have been thought through. The housing numbers per district are calculated by another 'algorithm' with no intelligent oversight or review of the outcomes. The government did not actually run the figures – it was the property consultancy Lichfields which ran it all and showed how it would cut building in cities, and in the north, and vastly increase it in the rural south east. This is the very opposite of the north-south 'levelling up' policy, or of sustainability as rural existence is almost entirely dependent on travel by car. The numbers for UDC would be the equivalent of building about three Saffron Waldens. Although, if control over housing permissions is largely removed from councils and left in the hands of landowners and developers, it is unclear whether mandated requirements would have any significance if there is no body with the power to implement them.

With no compulsion on developers to build it is not even clear it would achieve its aim of building more houses – developers restrict supply to keep prices high and their supply chain costs down.

References

1. "Planning for the Future" consultation document:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907647/MHCLG-Planning-Consultation.pdf

2. "Planning for the Future" consultation page and information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

3. Second consultation on housing numbers:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907215/200805_Changes_to_the_current_planning_system_FINAL_version.pdf

4. Interview with one of the architects of the government proposals:

<https://youtu.be/fE6KD4K8ugk>

5. Dr Hugh Ellis (TCPA) blog: <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/blog/blog-the-planning-white-paper-and-that-morningafter-feeling-hugh-ellis>

Neighbourhood Plan

There is an outstanding matter concerning one of the policies where the examiner's alterations left the wording of a point in the policy on building outside development limits ambiguous. It could be interpreted as allowing development to add on to existing clusters in the countryside without limit. This would also be contrary to the adopted Local Plan to which Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity. The Steering Group believed that the rules allow UDC to amend the examiner's text in these circumstances, and the deletion of three words will solve the problem. However, we could not convince them. As a result, this will be going back to a six week consultation, just on this one item, not the whole plan. A document to support the requested alteration has been sent to UDC, who will administer the consultation.

Neil Hargreaves

Appendix 2.

County Councillor Gooding's Report – 9th September 2020

Normally in September we see the return of children with excitement and some trepidation. However, with all that has happened this year that process is much more complicated than usual and the preparations that schools have had to make to welcome the children back has been far more extensive and significantly different from every other year. I would like to thank School Leaders, teachers and other staff for all the work they have done to plan for this and ensure that schools are safe and welcoming places.

Schools across the County are now open and children are returning after an extended time at home and I know that the excitement at the return is shared not only by the children who can again meet with their friends and recommence their education but also by the teachers who are looking forward to welcoming everybody back.

It is my hope that all children will return to school without any concerns but one of the questions I am asked is whether parents will be fined if they elect not to bring their children back. My response to that question is that if, as a parent, you are concerned you must speak with the head of your child's school. Clearly, if you are shielding a member of your family or have other reasons not to return then that does need to be recorded so that assistance can be provided. However, the education of our children is such an important matter that it is necessary for head teachers to retain the ability to refer families where adequate reasons for non-attendance are a concern.

There is a great deal of information available to parents at this time and if any children within the parish are starting Reception this year then the TLC facebook page may be helpful. And if getting to school is a problem then the StopSwapGo website will give information on all they need to know.

On the local Issues I know that the issue of flooding is a constant concern within Manuden and I have over the last week been working with the Highway officers to establish a regime to ensure that not only those gully's in the centre of the village (that have been inspected recently – note the coloured dots adjacent to them) are covered but also those that are located further afield including the ditches and culverts that are Highway responsibility are checked more regularly. To this end I am endeavouring to arranging a visit by the officers in the next few weeks and will hopefully be in a position to invite representatives from the parish as well.

With regard to the issue of the now deceased trees I can confirm that I have been in conversation with the Officers and that they have agreed to offer a wider range of replacements than was previously the case. I note that this is included on the agenda for this evening and I hope you will be able to come to a conclusion. Please let me know what is decided and I will do what I can to expedite the replacement at the appropriate time. I must however, reiterate that It is unfortunate that you did not include me in the earlier conversations because I am sure that I could have diffused the dissatisfaction felt by the Parish over this matter.

I have now given the go ahead for the 40mph buffer zone as I set out in my recent correspondence with the chair and the works to finalise those details for the implementation within this financial year are proceeding. In addition to that the proposals from Bruce Bamber are being assessed and responses will be provided in due course.

Ray Gooding
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Member for Stansted