



MINUTES

Virtual Meeting: COUNCIL

Date: 13th August 2020

Time: 8.00pm

Hosted from: COUNCIL OFFICES, HAINAULT ROAD, CHIGWELL

PRESENT: Councillors (9)

Councillors; Pranav Bhanot (Chairman), #Naveed Akhtar, Jamie Braha, Kewal Chana, Alan Lion (Vice-Chairman), Faiza Rizvi, Mona Sehmi, Barry Scrutton and Darshan Singh Sunger.

Officers (1)

Anthony Belgrave – Clerk to the Council.

Also in Attendance

There were members of the public in attendance.

for part of the meeting.

20.55 RECORDING OF MEETINGS

NOTED that in accordance with Standing Order 3 (1) photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting may take place.

20.56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

Members **NOTED** that apologies had been received from Councillors; Deborah Barlow and Rochelle Hodds.

20.57 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

Members **NOTED** that apologies there were no other absences.

20.58 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Chairman reminded members that most of these documents have been available since previous council meetings, therefore Members have had some time to provide feedback. He then enquired as to whether there is any further feedback at this stage. In response, Councillor Rizvi stated that certain details described in the draft minutes of the meeting held on 7th May 2020, were factually incorrect, Councillor Braha then reiterated this position. In response to queries from the Chairman, Councillor Rizvi proposed that when those inaccurate details are removed, then she would be happy to support the approval of this document. In response to discussions, Councillor Scrutton reminded Members that these minutes concern a meeting which occurred on 7th May 2020, and to delay this action until September 2020 was unfair. In response, Councillor Lion stated that Councillor Rizvi had previously identified an area of concern, but this had not been registered formerly, he then suggested that the concern should be dealt with before the next council meeting, as the matter should not be raised at a public meeting. In response to further discussions, Councillor Rivzi advised members she would indicate the changes, to be considered by the council at the next meeting.



After further discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information was **NOTED**.
- The minutes for the meetings held on 6th May 2020, 11th June 2020, 19th June 2020 & 9th July 2020 were **CONFIRMED**.
- The minutes for the meeting held on 7th May 2020 would be considered at the next meeting in September 2020.

20.59 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members **NOTED** that there were no Declarations of Interest.

20.60 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

The following questions were asked by an attending member of the public, pertaining to specific items on the agenda;

Q. A member of the public stated that the CRA have a couple of questions regarding items on the agenda. The first question concerns the 'List of Payments.' An expenditure has been issued towards 'Lucas Landscapes' for allotment clearance at Gravel lane for £2095.20. This was discussed at the last meeting, understandably there is a demand for this service, but at the last meeting other alternatives were discussed, given that the revenue of a single allotment is only £40 per year. The public attendee then questioned whether this action has been approved by the council, as her audio recording of the meeting does not support this action, only that it was intended further considerations would be made. The other question concerns the 'Clear business' water bill of £1223.12, What site and what period does that concern, given that the Victory Hall has been closed to the public, for the past few months. The second questions concerns item **11**. This council previously decided a couple of years ago that they only wanted to take written questions, this is because certain Councillors didn't like the questions being asked of them. The incident made the Press, then the council reversed this decision, when certain Councillors stepped down. Now it has reappeared back on the agenda. The member of the public then stated that we cannot understand why the council does not wish to have questions from residents, on the floor. She reminded Members that the 'List of payments' was not published until today, so residents cannot submit a written question in advance pertaining to a list that was only published today. Written questions have been submitted before, and quite often they have not been answered, 'pushed-down-the-road', or in one notable case edited, before they were asked, without the permission of the person submitting the question. She further stated that the CRA strongly objects to this proposal.

A. In response, the Chairman asked the Clerk if he would be able to answer the questions pertaining to the 'List of Payments.' The Clerk then stated that the received question states that the payment of £1223.12 to 'Clear Business' only appeared on the list today, however this particular payment was published on Friday 7th August 2020, with regards to the site and period this payment relates to, consultation with the RFO would be required before the question can be answered.



Councillor Scrutton then interjected, stating that he thought the payment was for a 'half-yearly' period, and was last paid for a similar amount on 10th January 2020, he then advised that further details may be garnered by visiting the office, and examining the respective invoice, which will be counter-signed by appointed Members, tomorrow.

- Q.** The member of public then requested that a supplementary question may be asked. She stated that as the Clerk has pointed out a revised list was published later, but just because one of our questions related to something that was on the original list does not excuse that fact that data is produced after the deadline for written questions. In response, the Chairman asked the member of the public to clarify exactly what the questions is. In response, she replied that can the Parish confirm that written questions only, will not be permitted given that information is published after the deadline. She then stated that her response, was a supplementary response to the Clerk's response.
- A.** In response, to further clarifications on the questions and after brief discussion, the Chairman advised that the matter of policies for public participation would be considered later during this meeting.
- A.** In response, to the question pertaining to the allotments, Councillor Braha stated that there is a waiting list for the allotment service, and the council is required to respond to the notably increased demand. He further stated that whilst he recognised the income generated was limited, the council was obligated to provide a service and is not a business but should respond to the demand from residents. Councillor Sunger reiterated the position of Councillor Braha, stating that the plots should not be allowed to become overgrown and whilst expenditures should be pursued wisely, the primary concern is providing a service and giving back to the community.

Councillor Lion stated that he was notified by a resident, who is presently awaiting an allotment plot that an allotment tenant has a 'digger' and he offered the council the opportunity to engage this services free of charge, but this offer was ignored; this was an opportunity to bring these allotments back into use, without expending considerable amounts of money. He further suggested that cost towards ground maintenance are adding up, and that it would be interesting to see what our total spend is for ground maintenance work which is not carried out by council staff. Councillor Lion further proposed as an action the council be presented with the overall cost for ground maintenance tasks, 'year-to-date.'

After further discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information was **NOTED**.
- A total of the overall costs incurred for ground maintenance task 'year-to-date' be featured on the agenda of the next meeting of the Finance committee.

20.61 COMMUNICATIONS

Members **NOTED** that no communications had been received.

20.62 DOCUMENTS ON DEPOSIT

Members then **NOTED** the documents that had been received and/or deposited with the Clerk to the Council during July/August 2020.



20.63 REPORT OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

a) List of Payments/Incomes/Account Balances

Members were advised that the 'List of payments' published on Friday 7th August 2020, details payments prior to the RFO being on Annual leave, during the preceding week, whilst the updated 'list of payments' includes those received whilst the RFO was away and up to 13th August 2020.

Councillor Lion then stated that having examined his emails it appears, for the second time he has not received the updated list. In response, the Clerk confirmed that Councillor Lion did receive the updated list of payments. In response, Councillor Lion stated that the Clerk cannot say the list was received, only that it was sent. In response to further discussions, the Clerk then confirmed that he had sent the updated 'List of payments.'

After further discussions during which some other Members confirmed they received the 'List of payments' on the morning of 13th August 2020, Councillor Lion stated that it was unreasonable to send a financial report along with planning information.

After further discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The list of payments signed up to 13th August 2020 be **APPROVED**, and that the summary of income received and the account balance, at that date be **NOTED**.
- Councillors Jamie Braha, Barry Scrutton and the Chairman would attend the office to countersign the respective 'List of payments.'

b) Reconciliation of Parish Council Bank Accounts with the Accounts Package

After brief discussions, Councillor Scrutton **PROPOSED**, and Councillor Braha **SECONDED**, that the reconciliation of the Parish Council Bank Accounts with the Finance Accounts has been checked, confirmed and will be signed accordingly on Friday 14th August 2020.

20.64 CHIGWELL CRIME STATISTICS

Members were reminded that at the meeting held on 19th June 2020, it was resolved to receive information from the Community Policing Team, pertaining to policing operations in Chigwell. This option was suggested because the Police were unable to give a presentation utilising 'Zoom' as was previously requested. Members were advised that this data received from the EFDC Police Community Support Officer, includes the crime statistics for Chigwell Row, Chigwell Village, Grange Hill and Lambourne, for the period 1st May 2020 to 7th July 2020, relevant good news stories and social media addresses.

Members then **CONSIDERED** the information, as shown at **Appendix 3**, After in-depth discussions pertaining to this data, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- Information pertaining to policing operations in Chigwell, from the Community Policing Team would be received by the council on a regular basis.



- Regular updates will be received on the progress on the attainment of 'Special Constables' for Chigwell.

Councillor Naveed Akhtar arrived at the meeting.

20.65 REVIEW OF THE POLICY FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members were reminded that in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders this council the following regulations apply to public participation at meetings of the council and committees: 3e), 3f), 3g), 3h), 3i), 3k), 3l), and 3m). Members were further reminded that at the council meeting held on 9th July 2020, during the Chairman's report, it was suggested that the responses to public enquires should be more considered and befitting of the questions received during these sessions.

Members were then reminded that at the meeting held on 5th March 2020 the following policy was approved:

- Public Participation Session with regards to specific items on the agenda.
"in future, the Agenda for normal meetings of the Council shall provide for Public Participation Sessions with regards to specific items on the agenda. The time to be allocated for these sessions shall be determined by the Chairman of the meeting."
- Public Participation session with regards to items of interest to the Parish.
"in future, the Agenda for normal meetings of the Council shall provide for Public Participation Sessions with regards to specific items of interest to the Parish. The time to be allocated for sessions shall be determined by the Chairman of the meeting."

Members were then asked to consider the following item on the agenda for Council meetings:

"in future, the Agenda for normal meetings of the Council shall provide for questions to be put by members of the public. The questions must be presented to the Clerk by 2.00pm on the day preceding the meeting. The time to be allocated for public questions shall be limited to 15 minutes or such other period determined by the Chairman of the meeting."

After full and in-depth discussions concerning this item and the relevant Standing Orders, Members **AGREED** that the matter would be resolved by way of a vote.

After, the result of the vote was announced by the Clerk, it was then moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that;

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The proposed policy for Public Participation be **APPROVED**, as follows:

"in future, the Agenda for normal meetings of the Council shall provide for questions to be put by members of the public. The questions must be presented to the Clerk by 2.00pm on the day preceding the meeting. The time to be allocated for public questions shall be limited to 15 minutes or such other period determined by the Chairman of the meeting."



20.66 MEDIA POLICY REVIEW

Members were advised that at the meeting of the now defunct Communications committee, held on 24th January 2019 a Media policy was adopted and that the purpose of the strategy is to define and regularise the roles and responsibilities within the Parish Council for engaging with the various media organisations which publish information. Members were then further reminded that, at the meeting held on 9th July 2020, it was resolved to defer this matter, to allow Members to more thoroughly examine the document, then propose amendments for consideration. Members then **REVIEWED** the respective policy document, as shown at **Appendix 4**. Councillor Lion suggested that the council's Publication scheme should be reviewed by the relevant committee, as it was last considered in 2016. After further full and in-depth discussions pertaining to this policy, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The Media policy would be **APPROVED**.
- A review of the 'Publication Scheme' would be undertaken at a subsequent meeting.

20.67 COMPLAINTS POLICY REVIEW

Members were advised that at the meeting held on 8th March 2011, this council adopted a complaints policy, which was reviewed at the meeting held on 19th June 2020. It was resolved that the respective document would be re-drafted so that it would be in alignment with similar policies from Epping Forest District Council, then at the meeting held on 9th July 2020, it was resolved to introduce a series of further alterations to the policy, namely: the period for the council to acknowledge a received complaint, would be extended from 7 working days, to 14, the period of investigation would be extended from 10 working days to 21, and the initial stage of investigation would be progressed by the Chairman and an applicable staff member.

Members then **CONSIDERED** the policy document as shown at **Appendix 5a** and the complaints form at **Appendix 5b**. Councillor Chana suggested that the wording should be altered by replacing the word 'we' with 'the council.'

After further full discussions pertaining to the policy document and the wording therein, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The Media policy would be **APPROVED**, subject to the grammatic corrections and the change proposed by Councillor Chana.

**20.68 LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME REGISTRATION**

Members were advised that the council has register to participate in the Local Council Award Scheme, this required a registration fee of £50 to be paid by this council. The scheme which is managed by the Improvement and Development Board (IDB), offers the opportunity to demonstrate that standards set by the sector have been achieved and establishes conditions for continued improvements. Members were further advised that to achieve a Foundation Level award, the council is required to demonstrate it has the minimum documentation and information for operating accordingly to standard practice

Members then **CONSIDERED** the relevant information, as detailed at **Appendix 6**. After further discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The participation of the council in the Local Award Scheme be **APPROVED**.

20.69 CHIGWELL COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH

Members were reminded that at the meeting held on 9th July 2020, it was resolved that the potential for establishing a Neighbourhood speed watch group would be investigated. Members are now advised that a response to an enquiry has been received, from the Community Speed Watch Coordinator.

Members then **CONSIDERED** this correspondence, as shown at **Appendix 7**. After discussions concerning the advancement of this scheme, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The Clerk would communicate the council's willingness to participate in the scheme.
- The council would receive an update on this matter at a subsequent meeting.

20.70 REPORT OF THE CLERK

The Clerk reported that he will be engaged in volunteering duties in support of the Epping Forest Foodbank, on Saturday 15th August 2020, 10am-12pm.

After brief discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.

20.71 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman reported that:

- Completed my reading of "Local Councils Explained." pre-reading provided to me on election as chairman.
- Attended two meetings pertaining to the Chigwell Member's Club.
- Attended council chairman training session.



- In early July provided opportunity for councillors to informally call me between 8pm and 10pm to discuss anything of concern or raise any points/issues.
- Weekly clerk's meeting.

After brief discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.

20.72 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

The following questions were asked by attending members of the public, pertaining to items of interest to the Parish;

- Q.** A member of the public asked when will residents have the opportunity to comment on what has happened in a meeting, for example when inaccurate or misrepresentation statements are made in a meeting, because you have said it will have to be a written statement at the next meeting. The CRA asked a question about the 'Clear business' invoice which is £1223.12, dated 10th January 2020, we were told that this is a bi-annual invoice, there was the same one issued in January, however I have inspected the accounts and there was an invoice in January for £631, 10th February for £469, 10th March for £353. As it is at the moment, we would have to write written questions. I am hoping that Councillors can answer this today, why it is believed it is a six-monthly invoice.
- A.** In response, the Chairman then stated that there are three ways this question may be answered, corresponding with either the Clerk or the RFO via email, or visiting the office. He further stated this is precisely the sort of question the council requires in writing, to enable the necessary research to be undertaken, which will allow an informed answer.
- Q.** In response, the member of the public stated, just to clarify this is a payment that is going out that we are questioning, Councillors are not able to answer the validity of this invoice, the RFO is not here to answer it, this is the sort of thing that if it appeared on an updated statement today, we would be unable to ask a question about it, thanks to your ruling, and now your telling me that despite the fact that Councillors are expected to sign these off, they are taking responsibility for public money being spent, nobody can tell me why the statement was made to me that this was a three monthly invoice and nobody can tell me how we are supposed to ask this publicly of Councillors and have a public answer, that the public can see.
- A.** In response, the Chairman stated on a point of correction, it was not a ruling, rather a democratic vote, and respectfully, I must say that it is such wording which is very unhelpful. He then stated that perhaps the council should know the answer, but at this time we do not, and this is precisely the reasoning for the resolution to receive written questions in advance of the meeting. He further advised that Councillors are not vested with all the information at meetings. In response, Councillor Braha suggested that 'as a point of order' the RFO, should be present at all council meetings, as he would be able to provide the answers to this type of question.
- Q.** In response, the member of the public asked when would the public have the opportunity to raise a question about what has just happened at a meeting. What would happen now. Your decision means that a question about the 'Clear business'



invoice would have to be written for the next meeting, or it would be responded to, in the interim. This is a public question, and should have a public answer, I don not want a written answer to this, that only I see, it needs to be public question, you have no processes for publishing these answers to the questions you are given, how do the public see the answers to the question if you are going to write back to me.

A. In response, Councillor Chana described the relevant processes engaged at EFDC, where the question is recorded and then an informed written answer is duly provided. He further explained that no Councillors have all the answers.

Q. In response to discussions, the member of the public said there are several questions that I submitted to Councillor Sunger in 2018, which still remain unanswered, I have a long email trail.

The Clerk then interjected and advised the Chairman that public questions should be direct to the council, rather than an individual Member.

In response, the member of the public stated they will relay these questions to the Chairman, then stated that these questions run back as far as 2018.

Q. In response to discussions, the member of the public stated they were not really satisfied with the answer to the question concerning the 'Lucas Landscapes' invoice, because the CRA have notes that it was not agreed, and one of the options was renting it free of charge and letting tenants clear the plot and it was suggested there was an existing tenant adjoining the plot, who could have cleared it. Can the council please explain the justification that no viable alternatives have been considered to spending over two thousand pounds.

A. In response, the Chairman asked the Clerk if he would be able to answer this question. The Clerk advised that he was unaware of any such option, as conveyed at this meeting until now, and the RFO certainty had not made him aware of such a proposal as described, therefore it was not included for consideration at a meeting of the relevant committee or the council.

After further full and in-depth discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The Member of the public concerned would convey the questions received by Councillor Sunger in 2018, which would then be duly answered, at the next meeting.

20.73 MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD TO THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

After discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that the following matters would be brought forward to the next meeting:

- Further clarity on progress and purpose of the proposed 'Terms of reference' document, to be drafted by Councillor Barlow, would be sort, then brought to the next meeting.

**20.74 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

Members were reminded that in accordance with the *Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960* and *Local Government Act 1972*, a council meeting must be open to the public and the press, and may only be excluded by manner of a council resolution, that states publicity would prejudice the public interest by reasons of the confidential nature of the business or some other reasons stated in the respective resolution and arising out of the business to be transacted.

Members then **CONSIDERED** whether the nature of the business and proceedings to be transacted, would likely result in confidential information being disclosed.

After, discussions, it was then moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that;

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The public and the press be excluded from the meeting, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed.

In response to a comment from a member of the public, the Clerk advised members that **Confidential Appendix 8**, has been erroneously uploaded onto the website earlier today, and has now been removed. After discussions, it was **AGREED** the appropriate actions would be pursued, and further advise would be sort from the relevant authorities.

20.75 VICTORY HALL LEASE UPDATE

Members were reminded that as a result of correspondence and committee resolutions a virtual meeting with the Trustees for the Lewis Memorial and Victory Hall Foundation was held on 22nd July 2020, in pursuance of establishing a lease agreement of the administration and management of Victory Hall. At the meeting held on 30th July 2020, it was resolved that a revised lease would be produced, as well as an updated 'schedule of dilapidations and wants of repair' report for the Victory Hall and the Chigwell Member's club.

Members were advised that correspondence with the solicitor has been initiated in pursuance of the council resolution to draft a new lease. The solicitor now intends to formerly respond on 17th August 2020, as to what further details and/or explanations are required. In response to an email sent on behalf of the council, dated 31st July 2020, she has advised that the stated deadline of 21st August 2020, could not be achieved due to prior work commitments. However, once the solicitor has read and understood the council's requirements an accordant timeline will be put forward. Members were then further updated on the progress of the associated inspections and reports, pertaining to Victory Hall and the Chigwell Member's Club.

After further full and detailed discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The Chairman would correspond directly with the solicitor in pursuance of this matter.



20.76 GROUND MAINTENANCE/ASSISTANT CEMETERY TECHNICIAN

Members were reminded that with the monetary support of the council the Grounds Maintenance/Assistant Cemetery Technician successfully completed his apprenticeship in February 2020 and the 'Statement of Main Terms of Employment' was considered at various council and committee meetings held between 21st November 2019 and 19th June 2020, it was resolved by recorded vote to employ the apprentice as a permanent member of staff, on SCP 11, at the meeting held on 23rd April 2020.

In accordance with this resolution and the associated statutory obligations, Members then **CONSIDERED** the 'Statement of Main Terms of Employment, as shown in the respective appendix.

After full and in-depth discussions, it was moved by the Chairman and **RESOLVED** that:

- This information be **NOTED**.
- The document is **APPROVED**, subject to the 'Job title' being 'Ground Maintenance/Assistant Cemetery Technician.

Signed

Chairman

Date