



GREAT HORKESLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes

**Minutes of the virtual meeting of
Great Horkesley Parish Council
held at 10:30am on Wednesday 8th April 2020
Members Present: Councillors Mead (Chairman)
Arnold, Baker, Flores, Taverner, Wescomb-Cross and Williams**

1. Chairman's Welcome: The Chairman welcomed members to the first virtual meeting of Great Horkesley Parish Council which had been set up using Zoom and following advice received from central Government and the Essex Association of Local Councils.

2. Apologies: Cllrs Duckworth and Ewing were unable to take part owing to work commitments. The Council **agreed** that this was an acceptable reason for absence. The Chairman advised that County Councillor Brown might join the meeting at a later stage.

3. Declarations of Interest: In response to the Chairman's invitation no members declared an interest in items on the meeting agenda.

4. Public Open Forum: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

5. Minutes of previous meetings: The draft minutes of the meetings which took place on 25th February and 17th March were **adopted** as a correct record without amendment. It was noted that no business had been conducted on 17th March owing to the meeting being inquorate.

6. Procedural matters relating to the Corvid-19 pandemic:

a. It was agreed that the Council's standing orders be amended in accordance with advice received from central Government and the Essex Association of Local Councils as set out in appendix A to these minutes. This will enable the Council to continue to operate despite the pandemic-related Government prohibition on public meetings.

b. It was agreed that if necessary the Clerk would henceforth be able to exercise all of the Council's powers herself provided that she had first consulted a member of the Council. For this purpose, she would attempt to contact members in the following order: Mick Mead (Chairman), Christopher Arnold (Vice-chairman), Lance Williams, Geoffrey Baker, Vic Flores, Teri Duckworth, Martin Ewing, Liz Taverner, Caroline Wescomb-Cross.

7. Village Warden

a. The Council noted without discussion the work carried out by the Warden since the February meeting, as set out in the meeting papers.

b. The Council confirmed that the decision already taken by the Clerk to suspend the Warden's work as from the 20 March 2020 in order to protect him from possible infection was appropriate.

8. Planning

a. Applications notified on the agenda:

200604 Oak Tree Cottage: It was agreed that after the members would advise the Clerk of their views on this complex application and that she would respond to CBC accordingly.

200722 The Old Stables: The Council agreed to make no representation.

b. Late applications:

No applications had been notified to the Clerk after publication of the Agenda.

9. Highways

Cllr Arnold reported that once the work on the section of the A134 south of the A12 bridge had started he had made direct contact with a senior ECC Highways officer to ask whether the contractor could be asked to restore the width of the footway before removing the small digger from the site. The officer had not been optimistic, but the request had been passed on and the work had been carried out. He would ensure that residents were aware that the contractor had 'done the village a favour'. The Chairman remarked that it showed that sometimes, persistence pays off.

It was noted that whilst a great deal of work had been done on the site and the volume of water was much reduced, it was still running from various weak spots in the carriageway. **It was agreed** that the Council would write to the Head of ECC Highways for a progress report and an indication of what would be done about the remaining water.

With the encouragement of Cllr Brown, **the Council also agreed** that it would inform the Head of Highways that it wish to be consulted before any decision was taken by ECC Highways as to the acceptability of the surfacing work carried out in 2019.

10. Reports from members and officers of other authorities:

Speaking as a Borough Councillor, Cllr Arnold reported that he had become aware that the owner the site of Great Horkesley Manor site, as opposed to the farmland around it, had been consulting CBC planners about the possibility of building sheltered accommodation units. This could meet the need for such accommodation in the village about which members had speculated during the autumn.

Cllr Mead reported that he attended the Passenger Transport Forum and had three pieces of news to relate. First, that the ECC subsidy for the evening and Sunday 2A service to the village had been renewed for another year. Second, that there would be changes to the route of the 84 service in the Suffolk villages. Finally, that tourist coaches would in future be setting down and picking up at the top of East Hill.

11. GHPC Documents

a. Risk Assessment: The 2019-20 Risk Assessment, as circulated with the meeting papers, was approved without amendment.

b. Asset Register: **It was agreed** to approve the asset register and the Clerk is to complete further work on the register which would be brought back to a future meeting.

12. Clerk's Report

a. External Audit: The clerk reported that the following changes to the timetable for the External Audit were being awaiting approval:

1. The publication date for final, audited, accounts for Local Councils will move from 30 September to 30 November 2020
2. To give Local Councils more flexibility, the requirement for the public inspection period to include the first 10 working days of July has been removed. Instead, Local Councils must commence the public inspection period on or before the first working day of September 2020
3. This means that draft accounts must be approved by 31 August 2020 at the latest or maybe approved earlier where possible.

b. Lockdown volunteers: The clerk reported that the volunteer system has been working very well and the volunteers are brilliant. 17 residents were assisted in the first three days after the flyers had been delivered; the number was rising daily. Assistance is mostly for shopping and collecting prescriptions. The Clerk has had a few lovely conversations with residents who have been appreciative of the volunteer service.

The lead volunteers have been given Hi Vis and gloves that have been provided by Community 360. The Clerk had been very busy coordinating volunteers, ensuring they have safety equipment, answering queries and speaking to residents, organising refunds for the hall cancellations as well as parish clerk work, keeping up with government guidelines and learning to use the new website. Her report could not be comprehensive because she had done so much more than usual

The Chairman spoke for all members of the Council in thanking the Clerk and all the volunteers for all they were doing.

Cllr Arnold asked that the minutes also record the Council's appreciation of the prompt printing of the flyers by JNV Print of Leavenheath, who had delivered them back to the Clerk in record time.

13. Finance

a. The Council noted without discussion the schedule of payments and receipts made since the last meeting which had been circulated with the meeting papers and which forms Appendix B to these minutes.

b. Other approvals: No payments required approval by the Council.

c. Refunds of Hall Hire fees: The payments listed on the schedule sent to members only were **approved**.

d. Village Hall payments and receipts: **The Council noted** the transactions set out in appendix D to the meeting papers as displayed on the Council website.

e. Financial regulations: The clerk reported that updates recommended by the NALC has already been incorporated into the Council's regulations therefore no decision was required.

f. The Clerk reported that a formulaic error in a complex set of spreadsheets had resulted in a small underestimate of the percentage change in the precept between 2019-20 and 2020-21 being reported to members at the January meeting. She was seeking advice from other Clerks with a view to using a simpler system in future.

g. **Unrecoverable debt:** The Council noted the steps taken to attempt recovery of the sum of £128.25 which it was owed in respect of a service provided. **It was agreed** that nothing more could reasonably be done and that the sum should be written off.

14. Village Hall

a. **Caretaker:** A list of already-approved work that needs to be completed in the future to the hall was considered, certain tasks would require a contractor and were on the list for the sake of completeness. The caretaker would continue to visit the hall regularly to check on security, while the hall is not in use.

b. **Grounds Maintenance:** **The Council confirmed** the decision already taken by the Clerk that grounds maintenance should not be carried out during the Government's lockdown, work was suspended as from the 20 March 2020.

15. Future meetings and business

a. **Annual Parish Meeting and Annual Parish Council meeting:** **The Council agreed** that in accordance with Government recommendations, these would not take place before May 2021. A consequence would be that by default the Chairmanship, Vice-chairmanship and Committee memberships would remain unchanged until that date.

b. **Next ordinary meeting of the Council:** **It was agreed** that this would take place under the new virtual meeting arrangements at 1930h on Wednesday 6th May 2020. The Clerk would issue the necessary invitations by Zoom. Noticeboards would carry advice that in future meeting papers would only be published on the GHPC website; this advice would also be published on the GHPC Facebook page and the community Facebook page, which would also carry the notice of meetings.

At this point Cllr Brown left the meeting in order that matters relating to confidential GHPC contracts could be discussed. These matters are recorded in Minute 16 of this meeting which will be approved by the Council but not be published.

APPENDIX A

Changes to arrangements for meetings of parish councils that take place during the Covid-19 lockdown as authorised by Central Government

- a The parish council can determine not to hold their annual meeting. So full council meetings that were scheduled in the mandatory March to May period can now be postponed.
- b The parish council has the flexibility to hold meetings at any time of day and on any day, to alter how frequently meetings can be held and to move or cancel meetings without requiring further notice.
- c Meetings can be held remotely. For the purposes of any statutory requirement, members of the local authority will be considered as attending a meeting if they can hear, and where practicable see, and be heard and, where practicable, be seen by other members and the public. This allows for meetings to be held by remote means including via telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webchat and live streaming. The “where practicable” wording is important because it means that it is not an absolute requirement that every participant can be seen all the time, even when they are speaking.
- d Meetings can be held remotely attendance at meetings in relation to voting, access to documents and facilities that can be employed to allow the meeting to be held remotely to suit their own circumstances.
- e The “place” at which a local authority meeting is held is not confined to the council building. The “place” may be where the instigator or arranger of the meeting is, or electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers. It could be an officer’s or member’s home.
- f Requirements for a meeting being “open to the public” are satisfied by the parish council holding the meeting remotely. This enables local authorities to facilitate and hold remote meetings outside of the council building and/or remotely and allows for members of the public to attend remotely.
- g Where documents must be “open to inspection”, this is satisfied by the documents being published on the council’s website. Documents include notices, agendas, reports, background papers, minutes etc. The publication, posting or making available of documents at council office includes publication on the Council’s website.
- h Where the annual meeting is not held, the appointments which would normally be dealt with at the meeting will continue until the next annual meeting of the authority or when the local authority determines, providing continuity of membership.

Appendix B: Financial Payments & Receipts

Account Dates: 18 February 2020 – 31 March 2020				
ID	TO/FROM	DETAILS	REF:	PAYMENTS/ RECEIPTS
116	Colchester Borough Council	VE Day Celebrations Bursary		£200.00
117	Contractor	Bus Shelters	2565	£40.00
118	Arco	Vehicle Signs Village Warden	Debit Card	£119.62
119	EE Limited	Mobile Phone	DD	13.88
120	Clerk	Salary & Expenses	Bacs	Left Blank
121	Contractor	Village Warden	Bacs	£831.00
122	Business Account	Interest		£21.38
123	Essex Pension Fund	Contributions	Bacs	£468.17
124	HMRC	Tax & Contributions	Bacs	£354.00
125	Contractor	Cleaning Bus Shelters	Bacs	£40.00
126	Contractor	Cleaning Bus Shelters	Bacs	£20.00
127	EE Limited	Mobile Phone	DD	£13.88
128	JNV Print	Covid -19 Residents Assistance Flyers	Bacs	£79.00
129	Colchester Borough Council	Electricity for parish lights	Bacs	£158.26
130	Contractor	Village Warden	Bacs	£630.00
131	Clerk	Salary & Expenses	Bacs	Left Blank