

Minutes of the Meeting of Dersingham Parish Council held virtually on 29 June 2020 at 6.30pm

Present: Councillor C Shepherd (Chairman), Councillor C Hipkin (Vice Chair), Councillor M Shepherd, Councillor T Bubb, Councillor D Murrell, Councillor B Hopkins, Councillor M Noble, Councillor R Frost, and Councillor B Anderson (phone link), *Councillor V BRUNDLE and Councillor J. HOUSTON.*

Also, Present: Sarah Bristow (Parish Clerk) Geraldine Scanlon (Communications Officer) and 2 members of public.

Actual meeting start time 6.40pm

13520 To Receive and Consider Apologies for Absence
It was resolved to accept apologies from ~~Councillor V Brundle~~, Councillor S Osborn and Councillor D Wright.

13521 To Receive Declarations of Interest and request for Dispensations by Councillors in any of the Agenda Items listed.
None Received.

13522 To receive a verbal report from Norfolk County Councillor.
Councillor S Dark was not present.

13523 To receive verbal report from Borough Councillors.
Councillor J Collingham advised she had been continuing to work on the regeneration and development panel.
She was pleased to report there had been no incidences with people visiting Hunstanton recently due to the good weather and social distancing appeared to be adhered to.
The verge on Station Road has been cut by the Borough Council.
A gypsy camp had settled in Dersingham recently with reports of large fires being lit. The police had visited the site Saturday and Sunday and confirmed the gypsies were no longer present.
A reduced version of Open Gardens is hoped to be held in September.
Crowd funding for the Pavilion was in place and Councillor Collingham hoped people would give generously. She also hoped to get additional funding from CIL.
Residents around Lifewood are still raising concerns regarding the felling of trees. Response from Borough Council had not been encouraging and hoped therefore once things return to normal post the Covid virus a tree forum be established to try to obtain clarity regarding the situation.
Councillor Bubb advised the occupants at 2 Whitehorse Drive had appealed against the enforcement order. However, they lost their appeal and have three months to remove the sheds.

13524 Chairman's Report – Future ways of Working
Councillor C Shepherd advised Councillors the latest instruction from the Government had been released regarding the re-opening of children playgrounds, however the guidance was somewhat unclear. She had held a zoom Meeting with the Clerk and Mrs Scanlon to discuss how the

new procedures could be implemented. It was felt a risk assessment was needed and the Clerk was to contact ROSPA to enquire if they could carry one out. Discussion was had regarding the implications of opening the playground. It was felt that further Government guidance was needed and any decision to reopen the play area would be taken by Full Council, therefore for safety reasons the play area is to remain close. Councillor Houston asked who would fund any costs incurred to enable the playground to open. Councillor C Shepherd advised the Parish Council would meet any costs. ROSPA were due to carry out an annual inspection of the play area in June and would therefore be asked if the risk assessment could be completed at the same time. Councillor M Shepherd stated there may be funding from Local Government available to help with the costs of items needed such as hand sanitiser etc

REPORT TO DERSINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL 29th June 2020

Future Ways of Working

The coronavirus pandemic has meant new ways of living and working for all of us. The lockdown has been challenging but has allowed a more measured and caring way of life. Our lives will continue to be restricted for some time and we should use this opportunity to look at the way Dersingham Parish Council works. We have operated with our current committee structure for a number of years and this is not necessarily an effective and efficient use of time and money. Now is an opportunity to improve our way of working.

Parish Councils have been part of the local government system since 1894 and represent the lowest tier. This means that we are closest to the electorate as each parish councillor represents about 220 electors, whereas our MP represents 72,000. Councillors are normally elected for a 4-year term and are not volunteers or employees. Each one of us has our own reason for standing as a parish councillor but the role allows us to make a difference to the quality of life for residents. However, being an effective councillor does require commitment and hard work and good communication and engagement are central. Our role is to represent the views of all residents, to listen to and understand those views and needs and then to identify issues. We make policies, bring about improvements through local projects, comment on development proposals, lobby other service providers and vote to make decisions.

To enable us to do all of this we employ two part time members of staff - the Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer and a Communications Officer. The role of the Clerk/RFO is to ensure that the Council as a whole conducts its business properly, to keep accounting records and to provide independent, objective, professional advice and support to Councillors. The Communications Officer is responsible for the preparation, publication and distribution of the parish council magazine, Village Voice, and administration of full council and some committee minutes.

The population of the village is just under 5000 and we currently have 15 councillors, although our full complement is 19. As a parish council we have the power to raise money, the precept (this year £149,000), and to spend the money so raised. The services include:

- owning and maintaining street furniture, benches, litter bins, dog bins, bus shelters, and some streetlights,

- owning and maintaining The Warren and The Recreation Ground, including the War Memorial Gardens and the children's play area,
- Owning and maintaining some grass verges and trees
- Producing the village magazine, Village Voice
- Maintaining a Facebook page,
- Maintaining the Parish Council website,
- Managing the Parish Council finances and setting the precept,
- Owning the Village Centre (leased to the DVCA)
- Owning the Social Club (leased to the DVSC)
- Leasing the Sports Ground (in turn leased to SGMC)
- Agreeing contracts for maintenance work
- Commenting on planning applications and proposed policy changes by the Borough
- Undertaking special projects – e.g. building the Village Centre, providing a Skatepark

Dersingham Parish Council, for various historical reasons is not highly valued by its community and our public reputation is poor. The Council does not appear to have successfully addressed this issue in the past and has carried on regardless, thereby confirming attitudes. Last year the project to build the village centre was reviewed and a number of governance issues were identified. Councillors agreed that improvements were needed, and work has begun but progress has been slow.

Our work has been mainly carried out in 5 committees – Finance and Administration, Environment, Communications, Planning and Staffing, which meet monthly (apart from communications which is every other month) together with monthly full council meetings. Usually there is a summer recess in August and 2 meetings in January to allow for budget and precept setting.

In respect of committees, full council has delegated to them the authority to make decisions on behalf of the council and they can spend up to the limit of their budgets. There must be between 3 and 7 councillors on each committee, with an elected chairman and vice chairman. The committees are supported by the Clerk and the Communications Officer. Each committee meeting is open to the public and has a formal agenda and published minutes. They allow the opportunity for all Councillors to become more closely involved to the benefit of the parish we represent. However, regular monthly meetings committees are inflexible and inefficient and at times not an effective use of time or money. They can take much time to achieve little, for example it took 12 months to get the sleepers around the flower beds in the War Memorial gardens replaced. For some areas of work more frequent informal meetings are needed and for others less frequent meetings.

Working groups have been used in the past as task and finish groups. They cannot make decisions or authorise spending on behalf of the council. They have been convened to look at a particular issue and report their findings to full council for a decision and spending. Recent examples are the Dersingham Village Centre review, GDPR and Dersingham Village Centre Liaison Group. Normally a chairman is chosen, notes are produced, and summaries are published. These meetings are not open to the public. Like committees they allow the opportunity for all Councillors to become involved and can be held as often as needed.

Taking each committee in turn:

Staffing – all matters relating to staff employment and welfare. Due to the confidential nature of issues under discussion meetings are held in private and no staff attend, although they may be invited. The committee has 5 members, the chairman and vice chairman of full council and 3 other councillors as proposed by the chairman.

Planning – to comment on behalf of the council to the Borough in respect of planning applications and policy issues. These comments are needed within a tight time scale.

Communications – the main role is Village Voice, but it is also responsible for the Facebook page, website, notice boards and publication scheme (policies). It includes the editor of Village Voice and 2 other non-councillors.

Finance and Administration Committee – financial planning, governance and general administration, council owned buildings, preparation of the annual budget and precept, receiving reports from internal and external auditors, making recommendations to full council on governance and financial matters.

Environment Committee – maintenance of council owned land and street furniture and related contracts, climate change and the skatepark project.

The latter two committees cover the bulk of the work of the council and are proving to be increasingly unwieldy with lengthy agendas and as a result matters take a long time to resolve. Simply to transfer the work of committees to full council would not be an effective use of councillor's time or an efficient way of making decisions.

Therefore, **the following is recommended:**

Staffing and Communications committees – to be retained.

Planning – to be retained and to meet fortnightly.

Finance and Administration – replace this committee with 3 separate working groups that will make recommendations for decisions and spending to full council.

- Finance and audit control,
- Governance (including general administration),
- Budget and precept setting (to meet between October and January)

Environment – replace this committee with 3 separate working groups that will make recommendations for decisions and spending to full council.

- Amenities (village maintenance),
- Climate change,
- Skatepark project

A seventh working group Contracts and Leases to meet as and when required.

For the proposed working groups each should agree a lead councillor who would be responsible for coordinating the work of the group and to be its main spokesperson. The groups should meet as and when required, with a minimum of 3 councillors together non-councillors if needed. To maintain transparency the meetings should be open to the public. Staff to attend finance, governance, budget and precept and amenities groups and the remaining groups as and when required. The groups would work informally with short agendas to provide reports and recommendations for action and spending to full council. This would enable more debate and transparency at full council meetings on the subjects brought forward and to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Councillor C Shepherd advised she had circulated her report regarding the proposed working structure of the Parish Council going forward.

The Clerk had circulated a response to the report submitted highlighting concerns regarding the proposed new structure. Councillor C Shepherd addressed concerns raised which are shown in bold italic.

Clerk's initial response to Chair's Paper on Future Ways of Working.

- Concerned that Staff were not consulted prior to report being agreed to be written.
- Said that it came about after the Dersingham Centre Review. The Council were not kept inform whilst the build was happening because the group were having working groups with only scant minutes, no public, no transparency. Will the same happen again. – ***This situation would not happen again as working groups would present public with full comprehensive notes and all proposals would be ratified by Full Council.***
- How are the Council going to stop the membership being the same on each working group and as such no democracy?
- Will a Councillor have to sit on at least one working group. – ***Each working group would have as many Councillors participating as possible to avoid it falling to just one or two Councillors.***
- How will working groups be given projects. -
- Current trend is for fewer meetings not more. – ***Currently agendas are too long, and the Parish Council needs to work more effectively.***
- How will working groups report – ***Reports will be presented to Full Council.***
- As RFO would have to insist that all quotes come and go via the office only. ***This would have to be in place as stipulated in the Financial Regulations.***
- How will working groups be advertised for the public so they can be involved – ***Via the website***
- Working Groups usually used to prevent transparency with the public. - ***Members of the public would be welcome to come to Working Group meetings therefore alleviating transparency worries.***
- What Staffing levels are needed and will the working groups be held within current staffing hours and not as previous when staff allocated to join working group and then working group decided to meet outside staff hours so staff not invited. ***This would have to be reviewed if the new working procedures are put into place.***
- How many times it is felt that working groups will meet.
- What cost implications have been considered.
- Staffing was historically three members picked by the Chair. All members should be elected by the Full Council.
- A tiny point but reports should contain an author and be dated.

S J Bristow
24 June 2020.

Councillor Anderson raised concerns regarding the structure change and advised any changes would have to be done with care and Standing

Orders amended accordingly. The report was discussed at length with Councillors highlighting pros and cons to the proposed changes. Councillor Anderson proposed a more detailed report be written by Councillor C Shepherd. Any Councillors wishing to give comment should do so to Councillor C Shepherd. Once the report is completed it will be circulated to Full Council for consideration. **It was resolved to approve the proposal for a further report.**

13525

Year End Accounts 2019/20.

a) To approve the figures

Accounts had been circulated from 1st April 2019- 31st March 2020. Councillor M Shepherd confirmed they were the same reports he had checked for the Internal Audit Controllers report. There had been no changes made since the IAC check. Councillor Hopkins proposed approval of the accounts. **It was resolved to approve the Year End Accounts 2019-20.**

b) To approve the Asset Register.

The working group established previously had met to review the Asset Register. Councillor M Shepherd advised he had requested a few changes which had been made. Councillor Brundle requested more time to read the document. The Clerk advised the document had been circulated numerous times as amendments had been made and the Asset Register needed to be approved for the AGAR form to be completed and the accounts finalised. **It was resolved to approve the Asset Register.**

C) Internal Auditor.

The clerk advised there was no update regarding the Internal Auditor until she had attended the virtual meetings arranged for the 6th and 7th July.

d) External Audit – Annual Governance State – AGAR.

Councillor C Shepherd advised there had been an extension to the completion date of the AGAR form to 31st July. She proposed the AGAR form be deferred to the July Full Council meeting. **It was resolved to approve the proposal.**

13526

Accounts for Payment.

The Clerk advised there were two additional payments which had only just been received and therefore did not show on the payment list provided to Councillors.

System 3	Anti-virus update	£162 (Inc VAT)
SSP Direct	2 x White Reflectors	£27.48 (Inc VAT)

Councillor Houston asked why the Parish Council had placed reflectors on the telegraph pole on Post Office Road when it was not Parish property or responsibility. The Clerk advised she had spoken to Sally Bettinson who had agreed the reflectors could be mounted on the pole. Councillor Houston expressed concerns regarding the money spent on the reflectors. Councillor C Shepherd explained it had been a decision previously made by the Environment Committee.

Expenditure transactions - payments approval list						Start of year	01/04/20
Tn no	Cheque	Gross	Vat	Net	Invoice Details	Cheque	
						date	
48	D/P	£15.00	£0.00	£15.00	07/06/20	C & E Handyman Services - Emergency H & S Tree Rec	£15.00
		13.07.20- 48				Ground Clanpress - printing	
47	D/P	£2,223.00	£0.00	£2,223.00	19/06/20	Village Voice	£2,223.00
		13.07.20- 47					
49	D/P	£162.00	£27.00	£135.00	29/06/20	System:3 Business Solutions_Anti-Virus Software	£162.00
		13.07.20					
51	Debit Cr	£27.48	£4.58	£22.90	29/06/20	SSP Direct - Red reflectors	£27.48
		29.06.20- 51					
Total						£2,427.48	£31.58 £2,395.90

It was resolved to approve the payments with the inclusion of the two additional payments advised by the Clerk.

The Chairman proposed that approval also be given for the payments of salaries as Ashton Shaw require our payment by 20th of each month. **It was resolved to approve the proposal.**

13527 Minutes of the Dersingham Parish Council meeting held virtually on 15 June 2020.

It was resolved to approve the Minutes as a true and accurate record once the following amendments had been made.

To add the following:

13504 d) August to be changed to July.

13507 b) It was resolved for the Clerk to purchase and install reflectors for the pole.

13507 d) Garden after War Memorial

13507 d) It was resolved for the Clerk to contact contractors to obtain quotes.

13508 a) It was resolved for the Clerk to contact NS&I requesting an update regarding the account signatories.

13510 It was resolved to unsuspend the Standing Orders.

13517 It was resolved for the clerk to undertake.

13528 Minutes of the Communications Committee held Virtually on 24 June 2020.

Councillor C Shepherd advised the Committee had met via zoom and discussed the current position of the Village Voice. Advertising is down from last year; Mrs Scanlon is to continue to contact advertisers however local businesses seem reluctant to commit to yearly advertising. Communications Committee next meet 22nd July.

13529 DVCA – Councillors to receive details of planned works.

For the kitchen light switch to be more accessible, DVCA had requested it be moved from behind the door to the other side of the door with the cabling being chased into the wall.

A second request was made to install a second electrical insect killer

near the kitchen door.

Councillor C Shepherd proposed DVCA both requests be approved. **It was resolved to approve the proposal.**

13530

Applications and Determinations.

All the applications can be viewed, and commented on online at the Borough Council's planning portal online.west-norfolk.gov.uk/online-applications/

The Council are to vote and make comment on the following applications:

Applications:

20/00861/F Application for removal of concrete render to expose original brick and stonework, installation of Larchwood cladding to exterior of lean too extension at the Old Bakehouse, 38 Chapel Road - **Approved.**

Determinations:

None received.

13531

Letter from Councillor J Moriarty – re Planning Applications.

Correspondence had been received from Councillor Moriarty advising the "Sifting" systems was under review for planning applications and asked Parish Councils to submit their views to aid the review. Councillors discussed the current procedure, the role the Parish Council plays in submitting comments on applications, transparency of the sifting process. **It was resolved for Councillor C Shepherd to draft a letter to Councillor Moriarty.**

13532

Correspondence.

The Clerk advised she had received correspondence from Parish partnership which had been circulated. Councillor C Shepherd asked for the document to be circulated again.

13533

Items for inclusion on the next agenda.

Councillor Hipkin asked what had been done recently regarding the Skatepark. He expressed concerns that the children within the village had little to do. Councillor C Shepherd pointed out that he was leader of the Skatepark working group and it was agreed that a meeting would be arranged to discuss taking the project forward.

AGAR form to be placed on next agenda.

13534

Date & place of next meeting.

Meeting to be held virtually 27th July.

Action Points Dersingham Parish Council Meeting 27.01.20
Councillor C Shepherd

- To speak with DVCA regarding a hearing loop being purchased for use at meetings.

Action Points Dersingham Parish Council Meeting 15.06.20
Clerk

- To circulate AGAR form prior to next meeting.
- To amend payment details relating to OPUS once the bill had been received.
- To purchase two white reflectors for the pole on Post Office Road.
- To contact NS&I regarding the signatory updates
- To Transfer money from DC Reserve to Staffing Budget
- Issue letter regarding the fence on Janoch Corner

Action Points Dersingham Parish Council Meetings 29.06.20
Councillor C Shepherd

- To write a more detailed report regarding the Councils future ways of working
- To draft a letter to Borough Councillor Moriarty regarding the planning application "sifting" review.