

**Minutes of the Meeting of Doddinghurst Parish Council held at 19.00 on Thursday  
14<sup>th</sup> January 2021, via zoom video conferencing.**

**Present:** Cllr. Mrs D. Dicker, Cllrs Mr G. Smith, Mrs J. Le Plage, Mr A. Oliver, Mrs D. Rogers Harrison, Mr A. Smith, Mr A. Farrow, Mr M. Capon, Mr D. Potter, Mr P. Arnell and Brentwood Borough Councillor Mr C. Poppy, Mr R. McCheyne, Essex County Councillor Lesley Wagland, Mrs P.L. Brooks (for Agenda Item 11-14)


1. **Apologies for absence:** Brentwood Borough Councillor Mr K. Parker
2. 🖐️ **Resolved.** Minutes of the meeting held on the 5th November 2020 approved and signed.
3. **Declaration of Interests** from Members of any item(s) on this agenda. None.
4. **Information:** Clerk's report back on progress and from decisions taken at prior meetings:
  - a) The Clerk and Deputy Clerk have continued to work from home since 23<sup>rd</sup> September following Government guidelines.
  - b) The creche have been using the Parish Room since 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020 but have had instances of covid since and will not be returning until at least wc 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
  - c) The ongoing uncertainty and need to follow the changes in government legislation have continued and councils and committee meetings continue via zoom video conferencing.
  - d) Children's Play Area – The play area was reopened on 23<sup>rd</sup> July in line with Government guidelines and can remain open during the current lockdown. It is still being cleaned on a weekly basis.
  - e) The contract for the 949 litre biffa bin was cancelled after the November meeting and credit note has now been received.
  - f) Burials – 2 new ashes and 1 full burial re- open since our last meeting
  - g) Allotments – have been very popular this year. 1 allotment half plot relinquished since last meeting.
  - h) The refurbishment of the Ladies toilet has been delayed another week to 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 as the builder is recovering from a hernia operation and covid and still not 100%.
  - i) The Annual Tree survey has been completed by Prince Tree Surgery – see Agenda item 15
  - j) Quote has been obtained for digging out a trench at the rear of Pear tree field. See Agenda item 16
  - k) Pear tree pond area. Cllr Dicker organised a survey of the pond and I am working with Cllr Farrow on organising the replacement tree that a resident kindly offered to buy. We are also in dialogue with the Ehren family about refurbishing the bench and replacing the plaque in memory of Eileen, a former DP Councillor who passed away before Christmas.
  - l) Logging highways issues on the ECC website portal continues as per our discussion at the last meeting. In reply to one resident of The Gardens this week regarding bin lorries destroying kerbs and verges I counted in excess of 35 logged items on the portal where ECC have responded that they will include in routine maintenance in the future as not a priority. This will be forwarded to ECC Councillor Wagland.
  - m) Work continues on making sure that our website meets The Public Sector Bodies (websites and mobile applications no2) Accessibility Regulations 2018
  - n) Parish Council Website traffic – 2330 visits over the last year, 1801 unique visits.
  - o) The Clerk and RFO received a demonstration of Scribe – see Agenda item 9
  - p) A couple of Risk Assessments are still outstanding – please can Councillors complete before the end of January 2021
  - q) Census is due to take place on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Information was forwarded to Councillors at the end of November requesting DPC assistance in helping residents comply.


5. **Information:** Schedule of correspondence received up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 -noted

6. **Financial Reports and Minutes and Feedback from Committees.**

a) **Information:** Noted: Financial Reports for November /December 2020 including RFO Report:

- a. Barclays Bank account funds on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2020 stood at £144,136.84p. In addition, there was £18,170.67 held in the Santander Bank and £40.15 held as petty cash making £162,348.46 in total (this excludes any accrued VAT refund). Overall, the funds are down by £6,376.86 from the £168,725.29 held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020.
- b. A VAT Q2 claim for £662.77 has been received and a Q3 (Oct-Dec) claim for £703.51 submitted.
- c. The Burial Ground income recorded at the end of December was an unprecedented £19,250.00.
- d. The F&R committee held on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020 recommended freezing the Band D precept at £62.45 per annum. As of 29<sup>th</sup> December 2020 we were still awaiting information from Brentwood Borough Council on the 2021/22 Council Tax base for Doddinghurst that will allow me to calculate the total annual precept to be claimed by the Council. This is for full council consideration and ratification on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
- e. The Clerk and RFO took part in a Webinar to assess the "Scribe" finance system as a future replacement for Sage, which is a generic business accounting package. Scribe is designed specifically for Town and Parish Councils and is a multiuser, web -based and cost centre structured system that is fully supported and would cost DPC £468 per year plus VAT. There are no additional charges for cloud storage or initial system training / set -up support. Councillors could have on-line, read only, access to the Council's Scribe account which would be technically and functionally a step forward for the Parish Council. Provided that bank accounts are regularly and accurately reconciled, reports, such as the external audit AGAR return and quarterly VAT claims, can be produced at the press of a button.
- f. To date, no money from the £5000 allocated towards a C-19 village relief/support fund has been spent or requested.

b)  **Resolved:** Approved the Schedule of Payments for November/ December 2020





c) **Information and**  **Resolved:** Planning Applications and enforcements to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 discussed and agreed. It was proposed by Councillor Capon and seconded by Councillor Smith that DPC would write to BBC planning to re state history that the DPC position has not changed in response to planning application 20/01783/FUL in that condition 4 should not be removed.

d) **Information:** Noted: Draft Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020

e) **Information:** None. Members had not attended any Committees attended since last meeting. It was noted that the Chair and Clerk have been invited to attend a meeting with Councillor Hossack at Brentwood Borough Council on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

7. **Information:** Councillors discussed the precept for 2021/22 as recommended from the F&R committee which is to freeze the precept at Band D £62.45 at the current tax base recently advised by Brentwood Borough Council as 1217 giving a Precept amount of £76,014 which is a cash increase of 1.1% or £839 on the previous year.

8.  **Resolved:** Council accepted the Precept of £76,014 as detailed in point 7 above.

- 9. Information and  Resolved:** Council discussed moving to the new Scribe accounting package from the existing Sage software as detailed in the RFO report above. It was agreed to accept the quotation for subscribing to the Accounting package Scribe from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to run from the new financial year.
- 10. Public Participation:** Essex County Councillor Lesley Wagland gave an update on recent flooding concerns and how she will address any water that hasn't drained away within 24hrs if she is sent photos. She emphasised the importance of gully cleaning and how cars need to move to allow for this with any required road closures taking longer because of covid. She also mentioned progress with vaccinations, a recent project on identifying bus shelter ownership, the ongoing pothole initiative, and need to send her photos in order to be able to claim against contractors. She is looking into the concerns raised about the number of reported highway problems in The Gardens. Brentwood Borough Councillor Roger McCheyne advised that the Brentwood Local Development Plan is progressing on schedule and Covid testing at the Brentwood Centre and vaccinations are going really well. Councillor Cliff Poppy gave an update on the Covid Community support hubs and Foodbanks.
- 11. Information:** The Councillors were updated on progress made with co-opting an eleventh Councillor to DPC since 2018 when the vacancy arose. The post has been advertised frequently and Mrs Patricia Brooks who lives in the Parish has now put herself forward as a candidate. Mrs Brooks has attended a number of meetings over the last 6 months and meets the criteria for co-option.
- 12. Candidate for co-option.** Mrs Patricia Brooks was invited to address the Council regarding her suitability for co-option and the Councillors asked questions on her experience for the post.
- 13. Nomination and Seconding of Councillor for co-option.** Councillor Debbie Dicker proposed co-opting Mrs Patricia Brooks as a DPC Councillor and Councillor Gerry Smith seconded the motion.
- 14. Ballot for co-option of new Councillor.** A vote was taken on the motion to co-opt Mrs Patricia Brooks as a DPC Councillor and was agreed by majority.
- 15. Information and  Resolved:** The Council discussed the Tree Survey from Prince Tree Surgery for maintenance of trees around the Burial Ground and Budgens Fields and agreed to the quotation received.
- 16. Information and  Resolved:** The Council discussed the quotation to excavate a trench along the Peartree field internal boundary adjacent to Dagwood Lane to prevent access through the hedgerow by vehicles which has recently occurred. The spoil would be banked on the field side of the trench. The Council agreed to accept the quote and responsibility for the open trench by providing the contractor with the letter of instruction that he requires to proceed.
- 17. Information and  Resolved:** The Council accepted the Chair of Blackmore Planning Committee's request to share consultee comments on future planning applications in Hook End and Wyatts Green on an informal basis only.
- 18. Information:** Other urgent information not requiring a resolution: Councillor Dicker and Councillor Smith mentioned defects in the pavements and the redundant telegraph poles along Doddinghurst Road which need to be logged with highways.

**The meeting closed at 21.00**

Minutes signed electronically:



Date: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021