**19LHPC12b Little Horkesley Parish Council**

**meeting held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 18 December 2019**

**Present:** Maria Oats

Chris Exley

Chris Jacobs

Hannah Taylor

With Cllr Nigel Chapman (CBC Rural North), Roger Drury (Clerk) and Jo Petersen (Clerk Des.).

**Apologies** were received from Susie Goldring.

**No Pecuniary or Non-pecuniary Interests were declared in relation to agenda items.**

**1. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November were agreed as an accurate record.

**2. Future of the Playground**

The future of the playground was discussed at length. It was concluded that in view of the financial pressures on a Council supported by a low tax base of only 90.7 Band D households and the falling number of children in the parish, the Council could no longer afford the ongoing maintenance costs of equipment 25 years old.

It was, therefore, agreed:

* The mainframe play equipment should be dismantled retaining only the two swings and child rockers.
* The gap between the bench and the fence should be closed as requested by various RoSPA inspections.
* The Clerk should contact Came & Co., the Parish Council Insurance company, to establish:
* The reduction in premium for the reduced playground with two swings and two rockers;
* The level of inspection required for the reduced play equipment;
* The handling of the reduction in the Asset Register – discussed further at Item 3b.

The Clerk should also contact RoSPA to establish the level and cost of inspection of this much reduced playground.

The Clerk should request Danny Thurlow to remove the main play frame by 31 March 2020 and Stuart Mosley to adapt the bench to meet the requirements of the last RoSPA report.

The Clerk will also draft an article for the Parish Magazine explaining the reasons for the decision to the community - the Chair to approve the draft.

**3. Finance**

a. Projected Outturn for 2019/20

The attached projected outturn for 2019/20 £5,225.74, including 2019/20 VAT Reclaim was noted – this effectively defers work on the oak tree until 2020/21 but includes the Clerk (Des)’s CiCLA course, current work on the website and her travel expenses agreed under Item 3c.

b. 2020/21 Budget

Some amendments were made to the tabled budget:

* Playing Field Maintenance Stuart Mosely – deduct £500;
* Came & Co – deduct £100 – previously indicated as likely reduction by Came & Co.;
* Fasthost – deduct £66.00 – new website host in place.
* RoSPA - £50 reduction inspection task;
* Training budget – deduction £100.

The result of these changes is that the 2020/21 budget is £5,272.29

Precept

Given a 2020/21 budget of £5,272.29, 2020/21Village Rate would increase from £39.08 in 2019/20 to £50.94 (+30%) in 2020/21.

However, if £500 were to be contributed from reserves this would fall to £45.42 (+16.22%) and with a contribution of £750 to £42.42 (+ 9.18%) – see attached 2020/21 Precept.

The Precept request must be lodged with CBC before the January meeting and the Clerk’s recommendation is that £500 from the reserves be contributed reducing the Village rate of £45.42.

(Note 1: The Government have set a 5% limit on increases in local government expenditure, but this has not yet been applied to Parish Councils.

Note 2: The suggested level of reserves to be held by Parish Councils is 1.0 – 1.5 of the annual precept and the recommendation would meet that criteria)

Asset Register

A key issue determining the insurance premium for 2010/21 is revision of the Asset Register which shows playground equipment valued at £20,089. It is assumed that this figure should be replaced by one reflecting the “as purchased” cost of the remaining two swings and two child rockers.

The following was requested;

* The Clerk should ascertain the “as purchased” value of the swings and rockers;
* The Clerk should seek advice from CBC whether they retain an interest in the equipment purchased for the Parish in 1995;
* Jo Petersen should seek advice from EALC on changes to the Asset Register. It is assumed that the Parish Council must approve a reduction to the value of the remaining equipment, the change should be recorded in the Cash Book and reflected in the audit papers for 2019/20.

c. Clerk Des’ Contract of Employment

The Clerk Des’ Contract of Employment was discussed, and it was agreed:

* Clerk’s monthly salary of £169.35/month commencing on 1 January 2020 should be payable on the 28th of the month;
* It would be reviewed annually to meet the requirements of any national pay awards or incremental increases;
* Travel expenses are payable at the agreed national rate.

The Chair outlined the personnel policies she was working on that are required by law now the Council will be an employer.

The Chair would review the current level of cover given by the Parish Council’s insurance policy to ensure we have the correct public liability cover.

The Clerk Des. should check that her household insurance covers her home becoming a place of work.

d. The following expenditure was approved:

* Maris Oats £350 – SLCC fee in relation to CiCLA Course;
* D A Page £72.00 – Grass Cutting;
* DV & SV £175.00 – annual donation.

**4. Affordable Housing**

Chris Exley reported that three sites were being considered by HastoeHA/CBC but the landowners of two of the sites had expressed no interest and the third had failed to respond.

(Post Meeting Note: The address being used to contact the third landowner are out of date and the Clerk would provide the correct address in the New Year.)

**5. Emergency Assistance Plan**

Several last-minute amendments were fed in at the meeting and a final version would be agreed at the January Meeting.

**6. Clerk’s Report**

a. Little Horkesley PC Website

Jo Petersen reported on her revision of the Parish Council website and the new layout and speed of access was welcomed. It was agreed that all the historical financial information should be uploaded to ensure all relevant information was available to the public.

Jo was requested to invoice separately for this aspect of her work prior to taking over as Clerk.

She had investigated the cost of personal email addresses for Councillors through the website, but an annual cost of £44/year was regarded as excess and it was agreed gmail addresses which are free of charge was a better option. However, It was agreed to purchase one email address specifically for the Clerk.

b. Roads and Verges

The repairs to potholes in Water Lane and Crabtree Lane were noted and felt to be inadequate as the respective potholes have been replaced by lumps in the road that would soon disintegrate.

Anglian Water pumped out the School Lane flood but had been denied access to the adjacent field to clear possible blockages – how to resolve this flooding issue remained a mystery but responsibility rests with ECC Highways not the Parish Council.

The Clerk would report the flooding on Vinesse Road at Kings Farm believed to be caused by a blocked drain to ECC Highways.

The Chair would discuss the flooding down School Road which appeared to be caused by roadside ditches either being removed or not maintained with the relevant landowners.

c. Nomination of Tree Warden

Chris Jacobs volunteered to be the Village Tree Warden – Clerk to action.

d. Eco Colchester

The Council was unaware of the authority of this organisation and agreed not to pursue their suggestion of trees to be planted in the village.

Cllr. Nigel Chapman noted that some 2,500 trees were going to be planted in Great Horkesley.

e. 2020 Parish Council Meeting Dates

The dates for 2020 Parish Council meetings and the Annual Parish Meeting were noted.

**7. Planning**

Application No: 192082 Priory Farm, School Road, Little Horkesley

The conditional approval for a mobile home to be sited in the farmyard was noted – the condition was that it was removed within **3years.**

**8. Correspondence**

The following correspondence was noted:

* DV & SV letter to Parish Councils from Cllr. Nigel Chapman;
* DV & SV November Update;
* RCCE Essex Warbler December.

**9. Items for the Next Agenda**

To reconsider the allocation of responsibilities of individual Councillors.

**……………………………………………………………. (Maria Oats – Chair)**

**……………………………………………………………. (Date)**

**The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 January**