

Draft minutes to be approved on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2014

## Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council

### Minutes of the Full Council Meeting, 16 September 2014

Present Cllrs: P Sopowski (Chair), S Arnold, C Marchetti, A Sturgess, M Coaker, C Hubbard, C White, M Thomas, D Tipp (NFDC), K Mans (HCC)

The Chairman welcomed the newly elected Councillor Mike Thomas to the council.

**118/FC Election of Vice Chair**

There were no nominations. The post of Vice Chair remains vacant.

**119/FC Public Participation**

Mr A Hutchin requested that more copies of the minutes of council meetings be made available to public scrutiny prior to the meeting, including earlier posting on the council web site.

Mr A Hutchin asked why there was no clerk to the council.

Mrs K Oliver on behalf of the Neighbourhood Watch group requested that in future the Neighbourhood Watch group be exempted from fees for mounting a stand at the village fete. Neighbourhood Watch is a voluntary organisation and explicitly not a fund-raising organisation, and is not able to sell anything on its stand, therefore any expenditure on the fete is a cost drawn from very limited funds.

**120/FC Apologies for absence**

None.

**121/FC Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest with respect to subjects on the agenda.

**122/FC Minutes of the Full Council Meeting Held on 15 July 2014**

In the absence of the clerk, Cllr Hubbard had taken the minutes.

Due to typing and printing constraints, the full minutes were only available in handwritten form. A printed précis of the minutes was distributed at the meeting.

Cllr Marchetti volunteered to get the minutes typed with the assistance of Cllr Hubbard.

Approval of the minutes was deferred to the next meeting. (Proposed by Cllr Sturgess, passed *nem con.*)

**123/FC Financial Matters**

**Scheduled Invoices**

In the absence of a clerk, the schedule of invoices was not available.

One overdue bill for inspection of the park is the only outstanding third-party invoice.

(Other invoices are "internal" for expenses incurred by councillors in the performance of their duties.)

The process was debated.

In principle, a full list of expenditure should be available to councillors and the public.

The chair remarked that some invoices were pre-approved since they were direct responses to agreed council spending and therefore should not need the same process of scrutiny as was applied to ad hoc and unplanned spending. (They still need to be declared, but the scrutiny process should be streamlined.)

In the absence of a formal proposal on procedure, no process changes were agreed.

Cllr Arnold declared specific expenses for

- Allotment keys
- Engraving of the allotment trophy
- Newsletter expenses

The Chairman requested invoices. Invoices were passed to the chair and checked by members of the council. Cllr Arnold's expenses were approved.

### **Newsletter Committee Expenses**

Following an enquiry from Cllr White, the council reviewed the policy for Newsletter expenses. The policy (agreed in 1997) is that members of the Newsletter Committee send out invoices to advertisers in the Ashurst and Colbury Parish Magazine. In doing so, the individual councillors incur printing, stationary and postage expenses. These expenses are met by the council at a flat rate of £1 per invoice sent out.

The Council agreed to continue the policy (*nem con*).

### **Council Insurance**

Insurance with Carne and Co has been negotiated for a fixed term. The coming year is the last year of the agreed term.

Renewal of the insurance for the coming year was approved.

The Council agreed that a competitive evaluation process be undertaken next year in preparation for the lapse of the contract.

**124/FC**

### **Staffing Committee**

Following a period of sickness leave, the clerk resigned on 31 August 2014.

The Staffing Committee has prepared a draft contract for a new clerk.

The Staffing Committee has completed a review of staffing policies.

Previous process for recruiting a clerk has been via an advertisement in the Lymington Times.

Cllr Marchetti asked if any applicants were known from previous rounds of recruitment. Cllr Arnold explained that the council was not entitled to retain CVs of previous applicants and that therefore documentation for all previous unsuccessful applications had been destroyed.

The Staffing Committee was delegated to

- Review the brief of the clerk
- Talk to HALC to see if there were any current clerks looking for additional work (on either a short-term or permanent basis)
- Review the previous advertisement (held by Cllr Arnold)
- Place an advertisement
- Draw-up a shortlist of applicants

It was agreed that the Full Council shall be called upon to interview the shortlisted applicants.

It was noted that a temporary clerk could be hired at a rate of £25 per hour.

No conclusion was drawn as to the necessity of employing a temporary clerk, but the chair was asked to consider the workload.

## **125/FC Recreation Ground**

### **Committee Report (from Cllr Coaker)**

A new set of goalposts has been obtained. Because of the need to bulk-buy, five posts were purchased. This gives the option to install a second set of goalposts to create a more formal pitch. The spare goalposts have been moved to storage.

### **Wheelchair/Buggy Access**

At the invitation of the Chairman, and with the permission of the Council, Malcolm Winch made a brief statement on behalf of Ashurst and Colbury Community Group who had been looking into park access:

- Access provision for the Ashurst fete had been well managed
- Normally, for casual uses of the park, the wide access gates are locked, blocking wheelchair users and wide buggies.
- Mr Winch reported difficulty in finding instructions in the vicinity of the gates for obtaining access.
- On a previous occasion, acting on behalf of a chair-bound local resident, Mr Winch had called the clerk and had been invited to make an appointment to have the gate opened - which is not conducive to casual use of the park.
- Mr Winch had made a survey of other parks in the vicinity and found that none had the same level of access restriction. (Photographs were passed to the chair who passed them to the Cllr Coaker as chair of the Recreation Committee.)

Cllrs Sopowski and Coaker outlined the reason for the locked gates: to deter use by motorcyclists and by people grazing or exercising horses.

Various access methods had been considered.

The instructions for gaining entry were believed to be posted near the gates.

It was agreed that the council should be given time to consider the issue and that the item be added to the agenda of the next meeting for a decision.

Mr Winch was invited to send further information to the chair by e-mail, commenting on the level of access available at comparable parks and recreation grounds in the area.

## **126/FC Allotments**

Cllr Marchetti thanked Cllr Arnold for holding the brief during his summer vacation.

Ian Oliver, liaising between the Council and the allotment holders, has met with most of the holders, but has been unable to contact a small minority.

Cllr Marchetti will send a letter to the allotment holders to

- Make holders aware of the presence of adders
- Make holders aware of the availability of mulch which is being organised by Mr Oliver
- Make holders aware of the allotment judging and awards

Mr Oliver was thanked for organising the successful allotment holders' barbecue.

Cllr Marchetti will write to Newtwork Rail requesting that they restore the upright stance of their boundary fence so that machinery can be operated on the allotments side of the fence.

Cllr Marchetti and Mr Oliver will investigate what can be done to the locks to make it easier to open the gates from both sides.

An exemption has been granted to a slightly oversized shed. (This is in keeping with the revised rules for the allotment.)

The Chair confirmed that he had received a bunch of keys from the outgoing clerk and that he believed that these included an allotment key.

**127/FC Highways**

Cllr Sopowski reported a complaint from a resident about an oversized continental lorry using Woodlands Road (probably as a result of using SatNav), and also about speeding in Woodlands Road.

At the invitation of Cllr Mans, Cllr Sopowski agreed to ask the complainant to contact Cllr Mans who could take up the issue with HCC Highways.

The Chair enquired about the general case of signage to avoid motorists being directed on inappropriate routes by SatNav. Cllr Mans responded that “This is not a SatNav route” signs are available, however they will not cover issues where SatNav systems are set inappropriately for the vehicle (where a road is suitable for cars but not for long vehicles).

Mrs Karen Oliver (who is a police volunteer) agreed to take to the local police a request for a Speed Indication Device (SID) to be mounted in Woodlands Road (where there is already a post for the purpose).

**128/FC Village Fete**

Cllr Sturgess reported on a well-ordered and successful day.

She thanked Sue Hutchin of the Ashurst and Colbury Community Group for finding additional volunteers to man gates, etc.

After expenses, the event had raised £3206-76

**129/FC Beat Report**

Mrs K Oliver reported no significant issues. (Two crimes had been reported for Ashurst in the last month.)

**130/FC Planning**

One application had been rejected by the Council Planning Committee because it would destroy the symmetry of a pair of semi-bungalows by building-up at one end (for which there is no precedent in the village). However, this was referred to the NPA Planning Officers and their decision will be accepted.

Cllr Arnold reported that an application for building a house in the grounds of 18 Wood Road with access onto Knightwood Close had been granted on appeal.

**131/FC Report from Representatives on Other Bodies  
Ashurst and Colbury Parish Councillors**

Cllrs outlined their attendance (generally with no specific reports).

Cllr Arnold reported on a meeting with Julian Lewis MP on the subject of Woodhaven.

**County Council**

Cllr Mans sits on the NPA and reported on the discussions of cycling, where the NPA is trying to strike a balance between access for cyclists and control of big events. He noted that there was little statutory governance for such events.

Cllr Mans reported on the upcoming County Council budgetary round, giving as an example his Child Services brief, which has a “good with outstanding features” report

from Ofsted, but is coming under strain because of the increase in the number of children needing support. In general, the pressure on the budget from statutory duties puts limits on the council's opportunities for discretionary spending.

Cllr Mans was thanked before he dashed off to the meeting of another Parish Council.

#### **New Forest District Council**

Cllr Tipp reported that NFDC was proposing to purchase equipment for the audio recording of Council meetings. (In part, this is a defensive measure, since members of the public may record meetings and there is a risk of presentation of a distorted view of the Council's conduct through selective editing.)

Cllr Tipp reported on a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to Eling Tide Mill to fund a new visitor centre (supported by additional local funding). This plan does not include any additional parking.

#### **132/FC Correspondence**

The Chair reported that there was nothing requiring immediate consideration. Relevant documents would be posted on the notice board.

#### **133/FC Items that the Chairman Deems Important**

None.

#### **131/FC Items for Discussion at the Next Meeting**

- Report-back from consideration of wheelchair access to the park.
- Report-back from the staffing committee on selecting a clerk

There being no other business, the meeting closed at approximately 20:50.

Stuart Ardern  
Volunteer minute-taker.