



Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council

25 March 2020

Decisions of the Council taken on 25 March 2020 following detailed electronic discussion and voting necessitated by the Pandemic Coronavirus

Responses: Cllr R Hutchings (Chairman), Cllr A Martin (Vice-Chairman), Cllr N Brooks, Cllr T Butcher, Cllr N Geary, Cllr L Harris, Cllr W McNeill and Cllr S Smith

Part 1 Open Items

		Action
20/47	Apologies for Absence - None received	
20/48	Declarations of Interests Cllr Butcher declared an interest in Item 11 Office Accommodation, as a member of HRA Executive Committee	
20/49	Minutes of Previous Meeting – No errors or omissions reported. To be signed by the Chairman	
20/50	Chairman’s Remarks - None	
20/51	Public Participation Because of the Pandemic there was no involvement by members of the public.	
20/52	Matters Arising – There was nothing to report on the following:	
	a) 20/25 Benches	
	b) 20/25c Chain of Office	
	c) 20/25e Path Repairs	
	d) 20/38 Safe Purchase	
	e) 20/39 Wingfield Inspections	
20/53	Finance Report The report having been circulated was unanimously by approved by members.	

20/54	<p>Neighbourhood Plan – Report from Cllr Brooks Consultation with residents took place during February/March 2020 via Highcliffe Herald, Highcliffe Cafes and schools. Results to be analysed. Progress meeting for 26 March cancelled, committee to continue to progress Plan via email, Skype and Zoom. Timetable and target date of Autumn 2020 to complete process for submission to BCP Council for review now under further consideration. Reconciliation of actual expenditure against grant (£2,400 via Groundwork) to 31.03.2020 to be submitted. Grant application for 2020/21 to be submitted (balance of £6,500 available from budget £9,000). New meeting date to be set when current situation allows.</p>	
20/55	<p>Planning Report Updates circulated. Report accepted unanimously.</p>	
20/56	<p>Allotments – A paper had been circulated to members. Roeshot Hill had a three year Agreement with CBC under which they manage new lettings and cessations together with other day to day issues at the site. The Agreement is due for renewal in April 2021. It seems appropriate to have similar arrangements with Walkford Association as it does the same. The current grant given to RHAA under the Agreement is £1100pa.</p> <p>Recommendation 1: Bearing in mind the relative sizes of the two Allotments it is proposed that an annual grant of £500 be paid to Walkford Association.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: Both grants to be indexed from 2021 in line with rent increases and both Agreements should run with annual renewal to 31st March 2024.</p> <p>Toilet Facilities at Roeshot Hill The cost of the existing toilet facilities (paid for by the Parish Council) is approximately £1100pa and the RHAA has opted to have an improved chemical toilet suitable for disabled people. The additional cost of hiring a Disabled Toilet is £360pa.</p> <p>Recommendation 3: The Council agrees to pay for this important additional facility.</p> <p>Administration Costs The appointment of a part time assistant to manage the allotments could be beneficial. On the basis of minimum wage for the equivalent of 1 day per week, the annual cost could be in the region of £4,000 - £5000. If the assistant could, in addition to managing the</p>	<p>TJ</p> <p>TJ</p>

changes in allotment holders and other regular tasks, seek to develop/acquire software for future billing – such as that presently used by Christchurch Town Council – the Council could then consider dispensing with the services of SVPP.

Recommendation 4

The Clerk to make enquiries for a suitable appointee.

The net financial position if the above recommendations are adopted would be as follows:

Allotment A/c 2020/21:

Item	£	Cum Surplus £
Estimated surplus . as above	3,000	
Reduction in Parish Clerk’s time to 10%	3,500	6,500
Removal of SVPP cost	1,000	7,500
Additional Allotment Assistant cost	4,500	3,000
Additional Grant to Walkford Association	500	2,500
Additional Toilet cost at Roeshot Hill	360	2,140

Overall the Allotment a/c would remain in surplus and, importantly, the Parish Clerk would have more time available to support the Council in matters other than routine allotment duties.

Recommendations 1-3 above were unanimously agreed. Recommendation 4 was postponed for the time being but will be reviewed once the Pandemic is finished.

TJ

20/57

Office Accommodation

In September/October 2019 the Council agreed terms with Highcliffe Residents’ Association (HRA) for use of the office and meeting room at the Old Schoolhouse, 254 Lymington Road Highcliffe.

The agreed terms for payments over the first 4 years was an annual payment of £3000 (payable at £300pm for 10 months from April) indexed to CPI at the previous December.

HRA has now requested a variation in these terms. They would like a fixed rental each year. The following numbers are representative of the recent CPI figures and it is considered that agreeing these as fixed rentals represents insignificant risk to the Council;

Rental for 2020 -21 £3000.
 “ “ 2121- 22 £3060

	<p>“ “ 2022 -23 £3120 “ “ 2023 -24 £3180</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION:</p> <p>The request of HRA be agreed and the above rental numbers be substituted for the CPI increases.</p> <p>Cllr Brooks expressed the view that the arrangement for occupation of part of the property should be recorded by formal licence. He suggested the exchange of “letter” is only a Heads of Agreement” not a Licence to occupy. Pending the completion of a Licence he further suggested that only year 1 fee should be agreed. Cllr Brooks stated he could only approve the recommendation on the above basis.</p> <p>All other members voted in favour of the initial recommendation which was therefore passed.</p> <p>However the Chairman agreed to bring the matter back to full Council to consider the need for a more formal Agreement once meetings recommence following the Pandemic.</p>	<p>TJ</p> <p>BH</p>
<p>20/58</p>	<p>Risk Management Policy A paper setting identifying the risks of running a parish council was circulated. This policy identifies the risks, estimates the likelihood of them happening and sets out the steps taken to mitigate them.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: To approve a risk management policy. A copy of the Risk Management Assessment will be included with other Council policies on its website.</p> <p>The recommendation unanimously approved</p>	<p>TJ</p>
<p>20/59</p>	<p>Retention of Documents Policy There are legal and regulatory requirements concerning the retention of documents. This policy fulfils our statutory duty; it also assists the efficient management of the Council’s business.</p> <p>The policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by the Council whether in electronic or hard copy form.</p> <p>Responsibility under this policy rests primarily with the Clerk of the Council. If any individual Councillor holds records (in any form) and they are of importance to the Council’s business they should be copied to the Clerk for her to retain. Councillors are advised to retain only a minimum of important records themselves and, on leaving the Council all Councillors must ensure that the Parish Clerk has copies of all important documents and must then delete all electronic records they hold and destroy all hard copy documents.</p>	

	<p>The Freedom of Information Act requires the Council to maintain a retention schedule listing record types it creates in the course of its business. The schedule lays down the length of time the record type needs to be retained and specifies what action should be taken when a record is of no further administrative use.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are invited to consider and adopt the policy and retention schedule. A copy of the Retention of Documents Policy will be included with other policies on the council's website</p> <p>The recommendation unanimously approved</p>	TJ
20/60	Update on Initiatives Launched in January 2020	
a)	<p>Revitalising the High Street</p> <p>Cllrs Martin & Brooks reported: A professional photographic survey of 35 locations of defective pavements in the 'High Street' together with 'Supporting Information & Evidence' submitted to Cllr Andy Hadley, Cabinet Member for Transportation BCP Council on 11th March. Awaiting BCP's response; action to be taken.</p> <p>Paul Basham Associates, Traffic Engineering Consultants appointed to undertake a 5 Stage project to measure/analyse traffic flows and related issues. Recommendations will in due course be made to improve traffic management/engineering as well as address environmental issues. Consultants Stage 1, vehicle flow 'counts' on hold in view of abnormal flows as consequence of Government restrictions in respect of Coronavirus outbreak.</p> <p>Other initiatives being 'worked up' to engage with businesses in Highcliffe 'High Street' as well as raise the profile of the project.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members were asked to receive the report and to approve a budget of £18,250 for the Revitalising the High Street which is within the overall Council Budget.</p> <p>The recommendation was unanimously approved.</p> <p>There were no reports on other initiatives below:</p>	
b)	Pavements	
c)	Wingfield Pavilion Improvements	
d)	Sensory Garden and Adult Activity Trail	
e)	A337 Fencing Replacement	
20/61	<p>Business Plan</p> <p>The final version of the Parish Council Business Plan 2020 – 2023 was circulated.</p> <p>Members were asked to approve the revised draft.</p> <p>The Business Plan was unanimously approved.</p>	

20/62	<p>75th Anniversary of VE Day Events cancelled due to Coronavirus.</p>	
20/63	<p>Responses by BCP Council to Various Matters</p> <p>In November 2019 a number of important matters were raised with the BCP Chief Executive and a detailed response has been received. Each of these is considered below together with recommendations on how to proceed.</p> <p>1. Maintenance of Verges & Footpaths</p> <p>BCP officers say they are keen to understand more about the work we intend to do (our Pavements Project) but they aver that BCP has no funding to specifically support our remedial programme. Since receiving this response the Pavements Group has met with officers so they do now understand all about our intentions. It is understood that BCP will be sweeping our pavements in future provided they are a minimum of 1.6 metres in width.</p> <p><i>Recommendation 1:</i> <i>Our project will be aiming to achieve the minimum width of 1.6 metres and it is recommended that BCP be informed that this work is absolutely essential to enable their sweepers to operate. Once we have evidential support for our findings together with indicative costs, BCP should be invoiced with the cost.</i></p> <p>2. Planning Process</p> <p>The issue of area committees is said to be under discussion at Member level.</p> <p>It is said that “where significant changes are made to a planning application the process is to undertake a further publicity period”. We have said this is not happening in all cases and we have been invited to send in details of any such application in order that it can be investigated</p> <p><i>Recommendation 2:</i> <i>HWPC need to decide whether it can usefully contribute to this discussion..</i></p> <p><i>A list of 4 applications where significant late changes have been made (2 in Highcliffe, 2 in Christchurch) is attached. Recommend the list be submitted to the Corporate Director at BCP for investigation.</i></p> <p>3. Earmarked Funds</p> <p>The clear implication of this response is that Christchurch earmarked funds are available to be used anywhere throughout the BCP area and not where they were intended to be used when</p>	

established by CBC. That could only be considered equitable if all 3 constituent parts of BCP contributed in equal measure. But they did not.

BCP Members are already looking into this as it is particularly important in relation to the distribution of CIL monies to the parishes.

Recommendation 3:

The Parish Council should invite BCP’s attention to the inequity of this and support the need for a proper debate at Member level.

4. Sensory Garden

This seems to be a positive response to our request to transfer the Recreation Ground to the Parish Council although why this needs to take “at least 12 months” is a mystery and a disgrace.

Recommendation 4:

A response should be made to the suggestion of “at least a 12 month” delay. The Council should ask why it will take that long and what are the barriers to a quicker turnaround ?

Subject to BCP’s response to the above question, the Council will then also consider whether to wait the 12 months (or more) for the transfer to be effected or, as an alternative, whether we should accept the BCP invitation to develop the project whilst the Recreation Ground remains in BCP ownership. There are risks and benefits to both approaches. Whichever approach we adopt we should take up the offer to meet with Michael Rowlands. .

5. Play Areas and Dowries

We have written confirmation of the intention to transfer the sites to the Parishes. The Dowry now seems to be £1000pa for 5 years and it is unclear from the response whether the 5 years worth will be transferred in a single sum or not. It is said that the refurbishment contracts are not yet complete and that there will be a retention period of 6 months for snagging. BCP officers again refer to it taking 12 months to complete the transfer and they propose that a “realistic programme to take forwards what has previously been agreed” should be considered at a meeting between BCP officers and the 4 Parish Clerks on 24th March.

Recommendation 5:

We should also enquire what was the actual date of completion of the playground work as we have previously been told the work was all completed. We believe that to have been in the Autumn yet now we are told it is “due to be completed shortly”. It is recommended that we enquire further into this.

6 Street Signage.

	<p>The response agrees that “Welcome to.....” signs are the responsibility of BCP but they are said to be expensive to replace. So it sounds as if there is little likelihood of any early replacements by BCP. But clearly these signs are very important to Highcliffe.</p> <p>Street Name signs are also the responsibility of BCP and it is said they will only be replaced when they come to the end of their useful life. Moreover, they would then be replaced without any authority branding.</p> <p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p><i>The Parish Council should inspect the “Welcome to Highcliffe.....” signs and, if thought appropriate, contact Chris Parkes in BCP regarding their early replacement.</i></p> <p><i>There is no logical reason why Highcliffe & Walkford signs should continue to display the Christchurch logo and it is recommended that we advise BCP officers that we propose to stick our logos to them.</i></p> <p>Cllr Brooks reported Re.Para. 3 ‘Earmarked Funds’</p> <p>Legacy Funds transferred from CBC to BCP Council involves both HWPC and BCP Ward Mudeford, Stanpit & West Highcliffe. ‘Paper’ submitted to Adam Riches BCP Head of Finance 22nd March (see attached). Focus of releasing funds to qualifying projects, at an appropriate time. Coronavirus pandemic necessitating BCP to review 2020/21 Budget (risk management in view of short-falls of income i.e. rents, licences, parking, government support etc). Accordingly, ‘case’ to release funds will be more opportune to ‘press’ later in 2020.</p> <p>Recommendations 1 – 6 above were unanimously agreed.</p>	BH
20/64	<p>Protocol on the Death of a Senior Member of the Royal Family</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is important to have a protocol in place in the eventuality of a death of a member of the royal family. BCP Council has a comprehensive set of instructions to cover all the principal actions that will be required. Additionally, the Parish Council should agree a local protocol as follows: 2. This protocol applies upon the death of the Sovereign, Consort of the Sovereign, Heir Apparent, or otherwise as agreed by the Chairman in consultation with the Clerk. 3. The Clerk is responsible for implementing this protocol together with any instructions from the BCP protocol. 4. The Council business will continue as usual but with respect. Any celebratory events will be cancelled or rescheduled. 	

	<p>The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, will determine what is appropriate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. A suitable News item will be placed on the Council’s Web-site together with a Statement from the Chairman. 6. Highcliffe & Walkford residents will be expected to observe the timetable for national mourning which is expected to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ D Day Date of Death ➤ D+1* Proclamation Day (London) ➤ D+2* Proclamation Day (Dorset) ➤ D+X Middle Sunday ➤ D+4 -D+9 Lying in State ➤ D+10 Date of Funeral 7. *A Book of Remembrance will be opened and available for public signatures in the Old Schoolhouse. 8. *Flowers will be purchased by the Clerk and laid on the War Memorial. 9. A letter of condolence to the Royal family will be sent by the Chairman. <p>(*Applies to death of the Sovereign only)</p> <p>The recommendation to approve the above protocol was unanimously agreed.</p>	
<p>20/65</p>	<p>Policy for Trees</p> <p>This policy sets out the duties and responsibilities of the Council with regard to trees on parish owned properties. These are principally to be found in Nea Meadows, Wingfield Recreation Ground, Lakewood, Roeshot Hill Allotments and Walkford Allotments. Other sites, if owned by the Parish Council will also be embraced by this Policy.</p> <p>How the parish council meets its responsibilities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each year a budget will be allocated for tree work after taking account of the Council’s experience in the recent past years. Spending from the budget will be authorised by the Parish Council in advance of any work being undertaken except in the case of urgent work (for example dangerous trees following storm damage) which for amounts not exceeding £1,000 will be authorised by the Clerk under the Council’s Financial Regulations. 2. An appropriate tree specialist will be appointed by the Parish Council before 31 March 2020 and once every three years thereafter. The specialist will carry out an audit of all trees 	

situated on land owned by the Parish Council and will submit a report to the Council categorising the results of the audit work as follows:

Category 1 – Trees in such condition that they require urgent attention because they are considered dangerous and could potentially cause damage or injury. Early consideration will be given to the need to isolate the trees in question by cordoning them off. Work on Category 1 trees will, once reported, always be attended to promptly, using delegated authority if necessary.

Category 2 - Trees not in Category 1 condition but which nevertheless require attention to prevent them causing damage or injury. This work will be carried out using a programme of works agreed by the Council with the Tree Specialist and with the Council's Contractor employed to carry out the work.

Category 3 – Those trees requiring routine work. These works will be carried out subject to available budget.

Category 4 – Those trees requiring no work.

3. The Parish Council may, from time to time, receive requests from residents (usually living adjacent to land owned by the Council) for tree work to be undertaken by the Council. If the work has not been recommended as a result of the Tree Audit it is unlikely to be work that is essential either for the health of the tree or the safety of the public. It may, nevertheless be work the resident considers should be undertaken and in this situation the Council will seek advice either from its Tree expert or from BCP Council. If, as a result, it is found the work is needed to prevent a legal nuisance, such as an obstruction of a footpath or damage to a building, the Parish Council will take the necessary corrective action. It should be noted that legal nuisance does not cover overhanging branches (which may be removed by the complainant), right to light or bird mess from nearby trees. The Parish Council will not assume responsibility if there is found to be no legal nuisance.
4. If any resident living adjacent to land owned by the Council wishes to undertake work to cut back branches on Council owned trees that overhang their garden they may do so at their own expense provided that no critical damage is done to the tree itself.
5. The possibility of planting of new trees will be considered by the Council when setting its annual tree budget. Where trees are removed as a result of a Tree Audit or following

	<p>storm damage or for any other reason consideration will be given to planting a suitable replacement.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any reference to Trees is to be read as including reference to branches • If any trees are the subject of protection under a Tree Preservation Order the Council will secure the necessary permissions before any work is undertaken. <p>Tree Policy unanimously agreed</p>	
<p>20/66</p>	<p>Delegation of Decision Making Advice received concerning the Coronavirus outbreak strongly suggests that local councils should consider how to manage their affairs in the event that key personnel are unavailable or meetings cannot be held.</p> <p>The following recommendations are made to facilitate this. They will remain in force until the Coronavirus pandemic is over.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any decisions that are required to be made at a time when no meeting of the Council is possible will be delegated to the Clerk of the Council who will consult with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council. In the event that either or both Councillors are unavailable the Clerk will consult with two other Councillors as available. An audit trail will be preserved and decisions will be reported to the next available meeting of the Council. 2. In the absence of the Parish Clerk the Chairman of the Council (or in his absence, the Vice Chairman) will take all necessary steps to ensure the Council's affairs continue to operate as normally as possible. Any actions taken under this recommendation will be reported to the next available meeting of the Council. 3. Immediate steps will be taken to add the name of the Vice Chairman of the Council to the list of authorised signatures for the Unity Bank. Appropriate online training will be given. 4. As a temporary expedient, should the Clerk of the Council be unavailable, the Unity Bank will be instructed to accept payments authorised by the Chairman of the Council. Any such payment will be counter authorised by the Vice Chairman and reported to the next meeting of the Council. 	

	<p>5. In the absence of an upcoming council meeting The Clerk of the Council in consultation with Councillor McNeill and after consulting available councillors, will submit planning recommendations in the name of the parish council.</p> <p>6. To ensure the Council meets its statutory duty regarding its year end accounts and AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) the accounts for 2019/20 will be closed at the earliest opportunity. The RFO needs to submit the AGAR in early June after it has been ratified by the Council and placed before the Annual Parish Meeting. We will therefore aim to complete year end returns in time for the April meeting of the Council on April 29th. Should this timetable prove impossible an additional meeting of the Council in early May will be convened..</p> <p>Recommendations 1 – 6 unanimously agreed</p>	<p>TJ</p>
--	--	------------------

Signed.....

Date.....