

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Full Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday 17th February 2021, commencing at 7.00pm
remotely via Zoom video conferencing**

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Cllr Janet Foster (Chairman) Cllrs Neil Bonter, Tim Brake, John Davis, John Hammond (part), Shaun McCarthy, Bryan Timms, Mike Sanders, Simon Thomas (part) and Anne Tomlinson
IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Goudie, Executive Officer (EO) 2 members of the public
APOLOGIES:	None

21.20 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed the Councillors, Officers and member of the public to the meeting, and confirmed the current Government regulations currently in place to allow remote meetings.

21.21 OPEN SESSION - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman then asked if there were any items to be raised under the open session.

One member of the public in attendance, referring to Agenda item 15 and 16, questioned the Parish Council's proposal to hold the community buildings project items under a closed session, being a community facility, they felt the public should be involved, and invited to comment during the process. The commercially sensitive and confidential nature of the items to be discussed was reaffirmed by both Cllr Foster, and subsequently Cllr McCarthy, who advised that the public would be consulted at the appropriate time, and the proposals would be in the public domain relatively quickly following this initial stage.

There were no further issues to raise, the Chairman closed the open session and opened the formal meeting at 7.05pm. Standing Orders were applied.

21.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Hammond had offered his apologies prior to the meeting however was able to join the meeting at 7.10pm at Agenda item 7 (Minute 21.26).

21.23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman reminded all Councillors of their obligation to declare any declarations of either pecuniary or personal interest in any Agenda items. There were no declarations of interest.

21.24 COUNCIL MINUTES

It was RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the remote Full Council Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 20th January 2021 following proposal by Cllr Sanders and seconded by Cllr Davis and agreed by all Councillors as a true reflection of the meeting and would be signed by the Chairman at the next available opportunity.

21.25 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman had nothing to report.

21.26 DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

District Councillor Thomas had submitted a monthly report which had been circulated with the Council paperwork and attached to the Minutes as Appendix 1.

Any questions should be submitted directly to the District Councillor.

21.27 EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

21.27.1 Report update and late correspondence

Cllr Tomlinson questioned the title of the report and asked if the supporting documents could be renamed for ease of reference.

The EO asked the Councillors if they were happy with the reversion back to the monthly list of correspondence, although items of interest and relevance were now being circulated, to which they were all in agreement.

The EO advised of two late items of correspondence. One from CCLA to explain the reduction in dividend and possible future, and one on an HCC initiative to encourage solar energy.

Cllr Timms raised concern with reference to the Parish Council's investment in the CCLA, which although members of the Finance & Committee gave a detailed explanation of how the fund works, the element of risk, although minimal was questioned, and it was agreed to bring this to the next Finance & General Purposes committee for re-evaluation.

21.27.2 Annual Parish Meeting

The Finance & General Purposes Committee had reviewed the date of the Annual Parish Meeting and had provisionally postponed it to the end of May. The EO advised that the regulations allowing virtual meetings were only in force until 7th May 2021, with no plans currently to extend it. If the APM is to be held on the last Wednesday in May, it would have to be held in person, and under the current circumstances, the Council need to consider whether it would be safe to do so, due to the number of restrictions that would undoubtedly need to be put in place. The EO suggested that it may be more prudent to hold a virtual Annual Parish Meeting at the end of April, on the originally planned date, and asked the Council to give this consideration.

It was agreed to keep the date the same as originally published, Wednesday 28th April 2021, and hold the meeting virtually. Cllr McCarthy confirmed that the community facility project team should be in a position to present the proposals by the end of April, subject to the Council's decision later in the meeting.

The EO agreed to contact the District and County Councillors to confirm. Cllr Brake raised the question of the County Council elections, and whether the County Councillor would be in purdah. The EO confirmed that Cllr Kemp Gee, having been in this situation previously, would be allowed to submit a factual report and it would be his decision whether he attend in person.

21.27.3 2021/2022 Council Meeting dates

The EO had circulated the draft meeting dates for the next Council year for comment and consideration. There were no changes and therefore these dates would be put forward for approval at the Annual Meeting of the Council to be held in May, currently scheduled for 19th May 2021. However, the EO raised the same issue with reference to remote meetings and asked the Council whether consideration should be given to changing the date of the Annual meeting to enable it to take place remotely before 7th May 2021, on Wednesday 5th May 2021.

After discussion it was agreed to provisionally hold the date of Wednesday 5th May 2021 for the Annual meeting but wait to see whether the Government extends the regulations to allow remote meetings after 7th May 2021, and if that is the case the meeting will be held as scheduled on Wednesday 19th May 2021. Only half the Councillors in attendance confirmed they would be happy to meet in person at this stage.

21.28 OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr Tomlinson, Chair of the Open Spaces Committee, gave a brief report of the meeting held on 3rd February 2021, following the circulation of the Minutes.

Cllr Tomlinson referred to the change with reference to footpath issues and reporting, in that the AEO will be taking over the administration, having now built up a good working relationship with the Access team and local rambblers. Any issues should now be reported directly to the AEO. The footpaths update will now take place in the Open Spaces Committee meeting, with anything of relevance, raised under this Committee report.

Cllr Hammond questioned Cllr Timms' ongoing involvement as Footpaths representative, and Cllr Timms confirmed that he was fully supportive and would continue to liaise as appropriate with the AEO where necessary and had been directly involved in the discussions and decision at the meeting.

21.29 PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr Thomas, Chair of the Committee, had not been able to connect to the meeting at this stage so was unable to report any updates arising after the meeting held on Wednesday 3rd February 2021, the Minutes of which had previously been circulated.

The EO, in Cllr Thomas's absence, raised the recent refusal of two applications for change of use from equestrian to gypsy and traveller transit pitches at 1 and 4 Briar Lodge. The second issue raised was that of the consultation on the amendments to Alton Neighbourhood Plan, which the EO confirmed would be discussed at the Planning Committee meeting, as the Parish Council had been formally consulted for response. However there had been some disquiet over the fact that all the neighbouring parishes had been leafleted, which would also be raised at the meeting. Medstead and Four Marks Neighbourhood Plan steering committee were also being consulted.

Cllr Timms raised the content of Cllr Thomas' communication with reference to the Briar Lodge refusals and comments therein thanking the planning officers for their assistance and support, and reasons for refusal. Cllr Hammond, as Cllr Thomas was not in attendance, suggested that this be raised at the Planning Committee meeting or the next Full Council meeting as applicable, to enable Cllr Thomas to respond as appropriate.

21.30 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr Foster, as Chair of the Committee, referring to the meeting held on Wednesday 27th January 2021, and the policies as below, which were now presented for formal adoption.

21.30.1 LONE WORKERS POLICY

Following proposal by Cllr Foster, seconded by Cllr Davis, and approved by all Councillors, it was RESOLVED to adopt the FMPC Lone Workers Policy, as circulated.

21.30.2 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/2022

It was agreed to defer approval of this document following the issues raised by Cllr Timms earlier in the meeting and the investment strategy would be reconsidered at the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting.

21.30.3 STATEMENT OF INTENT 2021/2022

Following proposal by Cllr Tomlinson, seconded by Cllr Davis, and approved by all Councillors, it was RESOLVED to adopt the FMPC Statement of Intent 2021/2022, as circulated.

21.30.4 RISK ASSESSMENT

Following proposal by Cllr McCarthy, seconded by Cllr Tomlinson, and approved by all Councillors, it was RESOLVED to adopt the updated FMPC Risk Assessment, as circulated.

21.31 FINANCIAL REPORTS

21.31.1 To receive and approve payments, bank reconciliations and trial balance at 31st January 2021

Following circulation, proposal by Cllr Brake, seconded by Cllr Sanders and agreement by all Councillors, it was RESOLVED, to approve the payments (as detailed below), bank reconciliations and trial balance as at 31st January 2021, as authorised at the meeting on 20th January 2021, with the following additions under delegated approval; £273.72 for fencing repairs, Annual Grant to Home Start Hampshire as agreed at the Full Council meeting and £81.00 for SLR replacement battery, totalling £1104.72.

List of Payments made between 01/01/2021 and 31/01/2021

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid	Authorized Ref	Transaction Detail
05/01/2021	Talk Talk Business	DD	34.33		Jan phone/b/band
12/01/2021	Lloyds Bank Credit Card	DD	35.31		Credit card
14/01/2021	Howard Carpenter	BACS	313.15		Allotment expenses
14/01/2021	John Watson	BACS	162.50		Consultancy fee
14/01/2021	Acorn Office Supplies	BACS	3.71		Stationery
14/01/2021	Brunel Engraving Company	BACS	177.60		Memorial plaque
14/01/2021	Southern Ground Care	BACS	330.00		Cricket square
14/01/2021	Vision ICT	BACS	259.20		Annual email fee
14/01/2021	Semrah Landscape Management	BACS	1,104.00		Open Spaces maint
14/01/2021	Right Action	BACS	930.00		Fire proof safe
20/01/2021	British Gas	DD	223.22		Monthly gas - BP
21/01/2021	SSE Southern Electric	BACS	353.91		BP Electric Oct-Dec
21/01/2021	Eddie Hodkin	BACS	315.00		Open Spaces maint
21/01/2021	Veolia Environmental Services	BACS	627.62		Allotments
29/01/2021	RS Fencing & Agriculture	BACS	273.72		Fence repairs
29/01/2021	Home-Start Hampshire	BACS	750.00		Annual Grant
29/01/2021	Westcotec Limited	BACS	81.00		SLR Battery
29/01/2021	Staff costs	BACS	3,300.03		January
Total Payments			9,274.30		

21.31.2 To receive and authorise February 2021 payments

Subsequent to the circulation of supplementary papers, it was RESOLVED to authorise the February 2021 payments, as presented, following proposal by Cllr Brake, which was seconded by Cllr Sanders and approved by all Councillors.

List of Payments made between 01/02/2021 and 28/02/2021

Date Paid	Payee Name	Reference	Amount Paid	Authorized Ref	Transaction Detail
09/02/2021	Talk Talk Business	DD	33.54		Monthly phone/b/band
09/02/2021	Lloyds Bank Credit Card	DD	17.39		Credit Card Payment
18/02/2021	Cllr Janet Foster	BACS	30.00		Expenses reimbursement
18/02/2021	Acorn Office Supplies	BACS	19.09		Stationery
18/02/2021	Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd	BACS	145.20		Annual Support Licence
18/02/2021	Hampshire Woodlands Ltd	BACS	4,920.00		Tree maintenance
18/02/2021	SSE Southern Electric	BACS	38.06		Electric - Bowls - Oct-Jan
Total Payments			5,203.28		

Cllr Brake asked the EO whether there had been any financial implications as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, to which the EO confirmed that, although the Council had lost approximately £2000 in sports pitch hire and ad

hoc rental costs, as expenditure has been slightly reduced this year, the Council's financial position remains under budget at this stage. The EO confirmed that next year's budget was calculated with zero income in anticipation that the current situation may continue, although no decision is likely to be made on sports pitch rental for the 2021/2022 financial year until April/May. The annual rental for the Benians Pavilion has been paid in full due to the Committee receiving a government grant for loss of use.

21.32 EXTERNAL COMMITTEE AND AREA REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

21.32.1 Allotments. The allotment plots that were not renewed in January have now been relet.

21.32.2 Benians Pavilion. No date for the AGM has been set to date, but the EO confirmed that initial conversations with reference to the basketball club, and associated youth club, joining the committee were relatively positive. There were no plans to open the Pavilion for the foreseeable future and were awaiting government guidance. The guttering is due to be replaced shortly and gullies have been cut in the kerbstones allowing for excess water run-off into the adjacent open space to alleviate flooding.

21.32.3 Oak Green. Nothing to report.

21.32.4 Village Hall. Cllr Brake had recently received an email from the Chairman of the Committee confirming that although they had lost £19,000 in revenue over the past year, they have received grants of £18,600 so have exited the financial year with minimal loss and are now awaiting the release of lock down to allow groups to hire the hall.

21.33 ONGOING PROJECTS

The EO presented the final version of the footpath map which would now be sent to print. There was an issue with permission at Five Lanes End, and the EO was waiting to hear back from HCC for an alternative suggestion. There were no further updates on any other outstanding signage projects for HCC.

21.34 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To pass a resolution in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude the public and press for discussion of the following items where publicity might be prejudicial to the special nature of the business.

Concern was expressed by Cllr Timms, following the issue raised by the member of public earlier, as to why the first item was to be held in a closed session, and why project details have been withheld to date.

Cllr McCarthy referred to his earlier comment, stating commercial confidentiality and approaches that would derail the project prior to it getting off the ground. Cllr Timms asked why this would matter and that they could be deflected, believing it sends out the wrong signals, to which Cllr McCarthy disagreed.

Cllr Foster raised the fact that this item had been on the Agenda every month for some time, but only now has there been interest from the public.

Cllr Hammond supported Cllr Timms comment, and referred to the Nolan principals within the Code of Conduct and sought further clarification on the clear and lawful reasons for confidentiality, believing that none had been stated.

The EO confirmed that there is confidential information contained within the presentation but had worded the resolution as such to give the Council the decision as to whether it should be held under a closed session. If Council disagreed with the motion, she advised that certain information would need to be removed. It was noted by Cllr Foster that it is difficult to make an informed decision when the content is unknown.

Cllr Tomlinson, agreeing with Councillors on this issue, that not knowing what information was to be disclosed, it was hard to make an informed decision, and the fact that it was likely to encourage communications and increase the workload, was not a good enough reason to have the discussion with the public excluded.

Cllr Davis, believes that the Council should be committed to transparency, and a session should not be closed unless there is commercial confidentiality, which he believes there was not.

Cllr Thomas entered the meeting at 8.10pm

Cllr Foster appraised Cllr Thomas of the previous discussions on the exclusion of the public.

Cllr Timms reminded the Chairman that it is only 16.1 that is being questioned as to whether this item should be held in an open session.

In response, Cllr Thomas advised that releasing any information to the public at this stage could end up with an avalanche of incorrect comments and commercial approaches from various people, and the Council are only conducting this item as it would at Town, District and County level, and should rightly be as an excluded item. Commercial issues are involved at the very heart of how the building would be funded and developed and the Council are only, at this stage, talking about taking forward a concept, and therefore premature prior to any tendering process.

Cllr Thomas raised concern that if the Council were to hold this discussion in an open session, somebody somewhere is likely to jeopardise the whole project, as previously. Cllr Timms questioned this statement, and Cllr Thomas responded that because of misunderstanding and the spreading of incorrect and prejudicial and confidential information is what happened last time. Cllr Timms believed that residents should be entitled to hear, but Cllr Thomas wished to avoid any deliberate attempts to undo all the work that had been carried out to move the project forward.

Cllr Timms asked for the vote to be recorded, the EO advised that Councillors would need to give agreement to their names being recorded against their vote. Cllr Sanders raised the fact that if Councillors did not want their names recorded, with public in attendance, would mean their votes would already be in the public domain. The Chairman agreed, and it was suggested, and agreed that all members of the public would be excluded for the vote.

The motion was then proposed with no amendment to exclude members of the press and public to the following Agenda items by Cllr McCarthy, which was seconded by Cllr Foster. Four Councillors voted against the motion to exclude members of the public from Agenda item 16.1, and Cllr Timms and Cllr Hammond asked for their names to be recorded against their votes. Six Councillors voted for the motion to exclude the public from Agenda item 16.1. Therefore, by a majority of 6 votes to 4, with no abstentions, the motion was carried.

Items 16.2, 16.3 and 17, were confidential and would also be discussed with the public excluded with all Councillors in agreement.

The Chairman pre-empting the fact that the meeting would extend beyond the allocated two hour meeting time, and as per Standing Order 3 (z) asked for Councillors agreement extend the meeting to complete the business, with all Councillors in agreement, it was RESOLVED that the meeting could be extended over the two hour time period to allow for the conclusion of business.

21.35 COMMUNITY FACILITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Cllr Thomas and the Chairman reiterated to all Councillors that the information to be presented should be treated as strictly confidential and not shared with anyone outside the meeting environment. The Chairman then asked Councillors to refrain from asking any questions until after the presentation when everyone would be given the opportunity to speak.

Cllr McCarthy introduced John Watson who had been engaged by the Council to act as a consultant for the project team and then proceeded to give a detailed a presentation of the proposed concept, financial proposals and procedural documents. Following the presentation, the Chairman asked each Councillor in turn for comments and questions. All Councillor agreed, and commented, that it was an excellent and informative presentation, and various questions followed, which included queries on funding, budgeting, provision for the

Scouts, flexibility of size and potential for future expansion, build costs, community engagement, and parking provision, all of which were answered as appropriate and to the satisfaction of the Councillor who asked the question.

The Chairman then put the three Agenda items to the vote.

21.35.1 APPROVAL TO BEGIN THE PLANNING PROCESS AND SEEK PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

It was proposed by Cllr Timms, seconded by Cllr Thomas and agreed unanimously by all Councillors, and therefore RESOLVED to move forward with Phase 1 of the project and begin the planning process by seeking pre-application advice with the concept as proposed to move the project forward.

21.35.2 APPROVAL TO APPLY FOR EHDC CIL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

It was proposed by Cllr Brake, seconded by Cllr Sanders, and agreed unanimously by all Councillors, and therefore RESOLVED, to submit a grant application from EHDC's central CIL Infrastructure fund.

21.35.3 APPROVAL TO INCLUDE THE SITE ON EHDC'S LAA LOCAL PLAN

It was proposed by Cllr Sanders, seconded by Cllr McCarthy, and agreed unanimously by all Councillors, and therefore RESOLVED, to include the proposed site for a sport, culture and recreational facility in EHDC's LAA for the Local Plan.

21.36 STAFF APPRAISALS

Both staff members had received appraisals following input and comments from all Councillors and were thanked for adapting so professionally to the continually changing circumstances and the additional tasks that had to be undertaken due to the pandemic and ongoing commitment to the Council and community.

After discussion, it was RESOLVED, following proposal by Cllr Bonter, which was seconded by Cllr Thomas, and agreed by all Councillors to increase the AEO's salary to scale point 18, to be implemented from 1st March 2021, with an additional point increase once CiLCA is obtained.

After discussion, it was RESOLVED, following proposal by Cllr Thomas, which was seconded by Cllr McCarthy and agreed by all Councillors, to increase the EO's salary to LC scale point 28, to be implemented from 1st March 2021.

21.37 NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 17th March 2021.

20.38 The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.21pm

APPENDIX 1

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

10th February 2021

District Cllr Ingrid Thomas

An issue which has plagued us for a very long time is that of dog behaviour and fouling. As the legal act on which the old regulations were based changed so a new order needed to be put in place. Officers have been working on this for a long time as many consultations were needed before it could proceed. Last week Cabinet agreed to support the Public Space Protection Order and hopefully at the next full council it will be supported and officers will be able to enforce it. Over 600 people responded to the consultation of which 70% were dog owners and in full support. The full details are available on the website but the most important parts of the order are

1 anyone in control of a dog that fouls in a public place must pick up dispose of properly that deposit.

2 if an officers asks the dog must be put on a lead

3 no dogs allowed in fenced playgrounds

4 dogs must be on a lead in council cemeteries.

The penalty will be £100.

Obviously it will be a busy time for officers as they have to be there to issue the penalty notice so it will be very helpful if there is any information of regular offenders so that officers can be in the right place.

Another issue that is causing significant problems is the huge additional number of walkers on our footpaths many of whom do not appear to be respectful of landowners or their property, breaking gates and fences or allowing dogs to run loose in fields of animals. Many sheep have been severely injured and animals have escaped through broken fences not to mention the huge costs of damage to crops. This is a problem that needs us all to act to educate those who are doing this whilst unaware of how to act in the countryside. Also to support farmers and landowners where people know how to behave and have just 'forgotten' by reminding those people this is not acceptable.

Covid Marshalls are now regularly patrolling the district, they are collecting information for the environmental health team so that help and advice can be offered to businesses. The marshalls have been well received and the advice offered to residents seems to be appreciated, they are working with the police as the do not have authority to issue penalties. They have also been in contact with all the local small supermarkets to help advise on covid measure.

Easthants have been amongst the quickest of councils to pay out grants to businesses to help them survive. Our councillors grant money has all been spent now on many varied projects in all three villages, plus some money to Alton food bank. The new councillors grant funds should be available in April .

APPENDIX 2

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT FOR THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2021

COVID 19 Update

There are no updates on the status with reference to the current lockdown situation, although an update is expected week commencing 22nd February.

Matters arising from previous meeting.

Hampshire Highways traffic division have been contacted with reference to carrying out a site audit for Blackberry Lane to find a suitable location for the SLR signs and await the outcome. Cllr Mark Kemp Gee has a small grant allocation available which could be used for this project.

The issue with reference to access onto private land raised at Full Council was discussed at the Open Spaces meeting and has just this week come to the forefront with a very strongly worded social media post. These issues have also been highlighted in the District Councillors report.

There appears to be a huge lack of respect by some local residents, and as, in theory, travelling for exercise is not allowed, the perpetrators must live in the vicinity and therefore should understand how to behave in a rural environment.

Also raised were the problems with footpaths, discussed in conjunction with the above and the issues raised at last month's meeting. It was noted that the majority of footpaths are very muddy at the moment, primarily due to inclement Winter weather and excessive use. In a bid to avoid the mud, walkers are using private land, even breaking through fences. Unfortunately, there have been reports of signs indicating private land being removed, dog walkers are letting their dogs run off the lead in fields of livestock with devastating outcomes and crops are being destroyed as walkers try and avoid the muddy bits. An article on this will appear in next month's Four Months News, together with a social media campaign to try and get local people to be respectful of farming land and livestock.

During discussions it was suggested and agreed that the way the Parish Council deal with footpath issues moving forward will now change, and the Chairman of the Open Spaces Committee Chairman will advise on this further at the meeting, although the summary is contained within the Minutes.

With reference to the Youth Club and the use of the Benians Pavilion, it was suggested that the Basketball Club become members of the Benians Committee which would enable them to use the Pavilion as a member rather than an ad hoc hirer, although there will be issues with club clashes, hopefully they will be able to negotiate usage times and when the Committee hold their AGM, the club organisers will be invited to attend.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind Councillors that if there any issues they would like to raise or add to the Agenda, or any motions they would like to put forward, to let me have them at least one week prior to the meeting for inclusion. Any 'day to day' administrative issues should be emailed either to Jo or myself at any time. The Public Participation session at the beginning of every meeting is for the public to raise areas of concern or ideas for the Council to consider in the future. Councillors are Councillors at the meeting, not members of the public, and therefore not the forum to raise general issues. Obviously, anything of an urgent nature can be raised, if not already on the Agenda.