

**PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES MONDAY 8<sup>TH</sup>.JUNE 2020**  
**HELD BY ZOOM**

**PRESENT** Cllrs. Anne Hughes, Peter Bunting, Clive Chambers, Maggie Holmes, Sarah Hughes, Richard Marriage, Ian Moore, Mike Strain, Brian Turner.

Cllr. Kevin Bentley Public Mark Jones, Linda Berrett -West

**County Broadband** Gavin Ashkettle, Martin Cook

**Solar Panels** James Hartley, Beverley Rodbard-Hedderwick

**20/89 Apologies for absence** Cllr Andrew Ellis, Cllr Jackie McLean

**Welcome** Chairman Mrs.Hughes welcomed everyone. She thanked all the Councillors for their support and hard work during the last 2 months. In particular Cllr.Marriage for taking on the task of sorting out the accounts.

**County Broadband** Discussion ensued about the problems encountered by the broadband works. Many residents were unhappy about various poles being sited in unsuitable places, without previous notification. Underground works had caused problems, with road closures and BT lines being cut. Open Reach have to mend these, paid for by County Broadband. Cllr.Bentley suggested earlier and better communication with the PC would have been helpful. Mr.Ashkettle agreed with hindsight this should have happened. They had spoken to CBC, ECC & Highways, but due to COVID, the usual letter drop to residents hadn't taken place Cllr.Marriage said that if the project was known about in January, there should have been communication then. The reply was the plans weren't complete then. It would have been a July start, but was brought forward, due to delays on other projects. Contractors have been spoken to and educated on the various problems, specifically in giving advance notice of works. Cllr.Holmes thanked Mr.Ashkettle for organising the removal of controversial poles that had been put up by the historic Water Pump at the Heath. The pole put up on Malting Green which is common land registered to the PC, will be removed. This should have been laid underground, but due to an existing duct being blocked it wasn't. This will be rectified and the land restored and reseeded. Cllr Bentley asked that warnings of road closures to do this and work in New Cut, be given in advance. Cllr.Bentley suggested a letter of apology to residents, would restore their confidence. Mr.Ashkettle will submit a draft letter, for approval by the PC, before delivery. He also thanked the PC for being able to attend the meeting and wants to repair damaged relationships.

**Solar Panels** James Hartley-Bond started the presentation with a slide show, showing the extent of the proposed solar farm. The project will produce 50 megawatts of power, enough for 15,000 houses. This is a project for new electricity, to underpin the Governments policy to be carbon neutral by 2050. Most local authorities need 4-5 projects to meet targets. There are 130 acres of grade 3 land, with about 1/4 to 1/3 being grade 2. No woodland would be used. Investigation of the site still in early stages. There will be detailed surveys, conversation with landowners regarding the leasing, getting connection to UK Power networks, local communication, about any issues that may arise. There have already been winter bird surveys, which showed no significant amount of birds overwintering. Historic Colchester will be involved, as there is possibly a Roman dike and other artefacts underground. Cllr.Bentley asked about transportation of the panels. The 2 primary routes into Layer are not ideal. Birch dam has a weight limit of 7 ½ tons. The bridge at Kingsford is narrow. Preferably wet weather transportation should be avoided. Mr.Hartley-Bond thought there could be 5-6 HGV's per day over a 16 week period, but the route still has to be investigated. Cllr.Holmes asked about benefits for the village. There will be no financial benefits, but maybe local school projects, biodiversity benefits, wildflowers, beehives, using local firms for fencing, landscaping etc. Visual impact was discussed. Flat land will be used as much as possible, there will be screening by woodland and the waterworks. Where it effects most, possibility for a 3-4 metre high hedge to be planted. Councillors will be approached first, to understand issues, with consultation plans. There will be opportunity for comments to be made on a website.

Cllr.Hughes thanked them for their time. The PC will discuss it more and will be in contact in due course.

**20/90 Declarations of interest.** None

**20/91 Public Forum. Local Plan** Mr.Jones asked about the implications for the village. He was concerned that COVID might let things slip through. Cllr.Bentley said the panel will be meeting in July and that the plan will be for 15 years. Cllr.Ellis will be better placed to explain.

**20/92 Minutes of the May meeting.** Approved.

**20/93 County Councillor Report** Cllr Bentley will continue to monitor Broadband. He will be attending a meeting on Thursday. He will try his best, not to let this happen again.

Libraries set to open 6/7/20. 16 initially then more over a 5 week period. Drastic measures planned for Colchester High Street. These are safety measures. Less traffic, more cycling and walking areas.

**20/94 Clerks Report** Chairman Cllr.Hughes gave the report. There had been no proper handover from the Clerk and a lot of unfinished work. As yet no handover notes have been found. No accounts had been kept since the 9<sup>th</sup>.March. Cllr.Marriage had taken on the task. The Chairman thanked him for all his hard work

## **20/96 Finance**

75.1 Cllr.Marriage had prepared a summary of accounts from 1<sup>st</sup>.April 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup>.June 2020. This had been circulated to Councillors.

75.2 Annual Governance Accountability Return 2019 – 2020.

Cllr.Marriage has prepared the AGAR form ready for presentation. It was proposed by Cllr. Bunting and seconded by Cllr.Strain that the form should be accepted and was unanimously agreed by all Councillors. He will also do his best to prepare the accounts for the auditor. An asset register has been found.

### **May Payments agreed under delegated authority**

G.Walkingshaw	001695	PC Salary	446.17	
G.Walkingshaw	001697	Mileage expenses	4.50	
G.Walkingshaw	001698	Office exps (stamps)	50.76	
HMRC	001703	Tax/Paye(Apr/May/June)	329.80	
Opus Energy	001702	Elec-Multi Sports Court	62.57	
British Telecom	001700	Invoice M005 DG	271.58	) BT returning chq. Credit due
British Telecom	001701	Invoice M005 W8	218.84	) ditto
		<b>Total less 2 BT chqs</b>	<b>£893.80</b>	

### **20/97 Planning Previously circulated No objections**

200866 8 Hawfinch Rd. extension to rear

00067 Threeways Bounstead Hill. Tree report & details to preserve them during building

201025 Queensmeade The Folley New access & planning

**20/98 County Broadband** Cllr Bentley will ensure an apology letter will go to the residents. He will ensure the pole on Malting Green is removed. He will follow up the question of Sunday working being allowed. The recreation field and land at the Cross must now be registered with the PC being owners.

**20/99 Tollgate Partnership** They are working on a leaflet, to be agreed by the PC, which will be sent to all residents.

**20/101 Grass Cutting** It was felt that recent cutting of Malting Green, wasn't as good as it should have been. It needed strimming round the obstacles. The recreation field also needed strimming. Heatherfields has been cut. Cllr.Moore will organise an onsite meeting with Pinnacle (contractors).

**20/102 VJ Day 15<sup>th</sup>.August.** It is unlikely there will be a village event. Hopefully the Cross will be decorated, as it was for VE Day.

**20/103 Solar Panels** Further conversation with the company is needed. Cllr Bentley will speak to Birch PC to get a combined view. Maybe there could be a negotiation for a community benefit. There will be an impact visually for Birch Road. There should be an impact statement in June.

**20/104 Housing Needs Survey** RCCE are still collating results. So far it appears there have been 11 requests for homes. The number is not final.

**20/105 Coronavirus** No comments

**20/106 Appointment of New Clerk.** Further discussion needed

**20/107 Transport Meeting** Cllr Strain attended the meeting. There had been much discussion about change of routes from the beginning of March. No change for Layer.

**20/108 Speeding Cars and Motor Bikes** Cllr Bentley agreed this is a constant problem. It is a police matter, only they can enforce it. He will speak to the Divisional Commander. He suggested a letter should also be sent from the PC.

**20/109 Information exchange** Cllr.Moore has been approached by a resident, regarding an extension of the footpath round the reservoir, to include the Peldon area. This is outside of our Parish. It is in the Wigborough/Abberton Parish. Cllr.Bentley, at one stage, used to chair the Footpath Committee. He was able to confirm that the landowner at Peldon will not sell the land for a footpath and it cannot be CPO'd.

The willow tree on Malting Green has been condemned. It is causing problems with overhead BT wires. It does need to be removed for safety purposes. Open reach requires upfront payment of £252 to disconnect the wire and the same to reconnect. They cannot guarantee this work can be done back to back. A motion was passed to give Cllr.Moore permission to solve the problem, without involving Open Reach.

Cllr. Sarah Hughes reported the 5 year old computer is running very slowly. It needs backing up and passwords changed. Cllr.Holmes will organise this work. It would be sensible to replace the computer. Cllr Sarah Hughes will research costs. Cllr.Bentley might be able to help with a donation from the Community fund.

Cllr.Chambers has received complaints from residents, about the dangerous parking of cars, on the roadside at Friday Wood. Again, this is a policing matter. This could be added to the letter to the Divisional Commander about speeding cars.

He also reported a problem with the track across Malting Green to one of the houses. It has potholes in it. A previous letter sent to the resident will be found, to determine what was agreed before and what action should now be taken.

**20/110 Next Meeting Monday 13<sup>th</sup>.July 8pm. Possibly by zoom. To be arranged.**