Alton Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 22nd April 2021 at 7pm
By Video Conference

Present: Councillor J. Shepherd, Councillor (Chair), Councillor P. Gwinnett, Councillor R. Wood, Councillor P. Ballard, Councillor E. Brindley, Councillor D. Gardner, Councillor E. James.
Mr S.J. Burton (Clerk)

Apologies: Councillor S. Hollins, Councillor M. Worthington (SCC), Councillor H. Plimley (SMDC).

It should be noted that one parish councillor could not attend the meeting due to the technical issues related to video conferencing.
Due to the Coronavirus epidemic the meeting was held under the authority of 'The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England And Wales) Regulations 2020'. The meeting was therefore held by video conference.

The meeting was opened by Cllr Shepherd at 7pm.

51/21. Declarations of Interest.

i. Cllr Shepherd declared an interest in the Rural Brewing Company item of business and would not take part in any decisions or voting on the matter.

52/21. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10th March 2021 by video conference.

i. The minutes of the last meeting were declared a true record proposed by Cllr Shepherd and seconded by Cllr Ballard and agreed by all and were signed by the Chair (the clerk to sign at a future meeting).

53/21. Matters arising.

i. Cllr Wood raised the issue of helping the village hall committee with payment for their new boiler. Following a discussion on the best way to help, Cllr Gwinnett proposed and Cllr Brindley seconded that £1,500 is offered to assist. This was carried. To be paid when the village hall are invoiced.

54/21. Coronavirus update regarding parish council business.

i. The clerk reported that face to face council meetings will resume after 7th May, but all the advice at the moment is to hold virtual meetings up to that date.

55/21. Lengthsman.

i. The new lengthsmans contract which had been circulated to the council prior to the meeting was discussed. Cllr Shepherd proposed and Cllr Brindley seconded that Buxus Green (Mr Paul Goodall) who is has the ground maintenance contract for the parish is also offered the lengthsman's job. This was carried. **Action: Clerk to update Mr Goodall.**

56/21. Alton Towers.

i. Cllr James reported that she has not received any complaints or comments about the re-opening of Alton Towers Resort, there has been some litter and increased traffic.

Alton Parish Council

57/21. Footpaths.

i. Cllr Gardner had nothing for this item of business.

ii. Cllr Gwinnett reported that she and the Clerk had a meeting earlier this week with the site manager and his supervisor to discuss the new development off Saltersford Lane by Walton Homes. There is a footpath at the bottom of the field where the houses are being built which Walton Homes have agreed to try to protect. Cllr Gwinnett further informed the council that she will act as liaison between the developers and local residents with monthly meetings to discuss any issues. There could be traffic issues with deliveries to the site at peak Alton Towers traffic times. Cllr James will contact Alton Towers to see if anything can be done to mitigate this potential issue. **Action: Cllr James.**

iii. Cllr Wood stated footpaths 19 and 22 are overgrown with crops. Cllr Shepherd volunteered to speak with the owners. **Action: Cllr Shepherd.**

58/21. Village Hall.

i. Cllr Ballard reported that the new boiler is now fitted at the village hall, three new windows are to be fitted and the building decorated.

59/21. Highways and Road Safety.

i. Cllr Wood reported that the potholes in Knights Lane have been repaired. He has also reported potholes at the Saltersford Lane junction with Uttoxeter Road and the B5032, these are not being treated as a priority by SCC.

ii. A discussion took place regarding parking in the village, particularly in the High Street and Malthouse Road area, partly caused as the Bulls Head public house are understandably using their car-park as an outside area for customers during the current Covid restrictions, meaning cars are parking on street. No solution was forthcoming and the issue will resolve as Covid strictions ease and the car-park is taken back into use.

iii. Cllr Ballard said she had received comments that Dimble Lane has hedges growing into the road again but she had not seen it for herself. Cllr Wood stated this is not the case and the hedging is better than it has been for quite a while. Cllr Shepherd will take a look to see if the verges should be taken back to the edge of the tarmac of the highway. **Action: Cllr Shepherd.**

iv. Cllr Wood stated that the Alton village sign on the Denstone Road, B5032, is damaged. Cllr Shepherd stated that John Moorhouse who placed the original sign is checking the damage. Cllr Wood stated he had looked at prices for a new aluminium sign and had a price of £780 + VAT for information. **Action: Cllr Shepherd to report back when the damage has been assessed.**

60/21. Parish Cemetery and St. Peter's Church Yard.

i. Cllr Shepherd reported that the cemetery and Church yard are in good order, the dry stone wall in the Church yard has been repaired, but the invoice for £400 has not yet been received (minute 44/21 ii).

ii. Renewal of the ground maintenance contract for Buxus Green (Paul Goodall). Cllr Shepherd proposed and Cllr Brindley seconded that the contract for Buxus Green is renewed. This was carried.

61/21. Planning and Licensing Applications.

i. SMD/2021/0148. Mr Adam Dronzek, 20 High Street Alton. Replacement of existing extensions with a single storey rear extension and a two storey rear extension. **No objections.**

ii. DET/2021/0015. Mr Dennis Power, Blacksmiths Arms Tythe Barn Alton. Change of use to dwelling house. **No objections.**

iii. Rural Brewing Company, Inglenook (half stable block at rear of premises), Hurstons Lane, Alton, ST10 4AP. Application for a Premise License to sell alcohol online only and no persons will be permitted to collect purchases from the premises. **No objections.**

62/21. Planning decisions.

i. SMD/2020/0729. 17 Bee Cottage, Saltersford Lane, Alton, Staffordshire, ST10 4AU. PROPOSED INTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO FORM 2NO DWELLING. **Approved**.

ii. SMD/2020/0714 and 0715. Communication Station Flag Tower, Alton Towers. **Approved**.

63/21. Parish Council Updates.

i. **The Millennium Stone project** – The Clerk reported that the stone is now complete. An article has been in the local paper and it has been added to the council insurance for no extra cost.

ii. **Village Planters**-Cllr Wood reported that he has visited the 10 planters maintained by the council and that 5 of them are serviceable and 5 are falling apart. Following a discussion Cllr Shepherd proposed the 5 planters that are damaged be removed, Cllr Gwinnett made a counter proposal that a decision is deferred until the next meeting when she and Cllr Shepherd would come back with a firm proposal on the planters and wild flowers, Cllr Shepherd seconded the proposal which was carried. Cllr Shepherd formally withdraw his first proposal. **Action: Cllrs Gwinnett and Shepherd to do a site visit and report to the next meeting.**

iii. **May annual parish meeting and parish council meeting dates (virtual meeting or physical meeting).** Cllr Gwinnett stated that she wished to propose while the law allows that the annual parish meeting and the next parish council meeting are both held virtually on Wednesday 5th May 2021. This will allow more to attend the meeting and avoid the possibility of having to abandon meetings if too many people turned up at the village hall than Covid rules allow. Following a discussion, the proposal was seconded by Cllr Shepherd and carried.

64/21. Correspondence requiring response.

i. None for this meeting.

65/21. Correspondence for Information.

i. Email to planning re March 2021 applications.

ii. Email from Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP re virtual council meetings (circulated)

iii. Emails to Alton village hall committee arranging future face to face council meetings.

iv. Annual Governance Statement circulated to the council.

v. Alton Towers email about opening and events (circulated).

vi. Further email to Cllr David Williams requesting information on SCC policy on hedges growing into a highway.

vii. Email from Lisa Hall, SCC giving advice re overgrown hedges and construction traffic at the building site off Saltersford Lane.

The correspondence was read out by the Clerk.

66/21. Finance.

i. Finance reserve-Cllr Wood asked how much money the council should keep in its reserve. A discussion took place Cllr James pointed out that at least £4,000 should be ringfenced in case the council had to fund a future election. Cllr Brindley stated that the present reserve was mainly due to the sale of land many years ago. Reserves are normally between 1 to 1.5 x the precept but can be lower always keeping money for unexpected expenditure. The councils reserve has been reduced by spending for such items as a new notice board and the repair of the Millennium Stone. It was felt that in reducing the reserve money should be spent carefully to give full value to the parish.

ii. Clerk salary £486.16.

iii. Parish council insurance renewal £466.77 (Zurich Ins). **Proposed by Cllr Shepherd and seconded by Cllr Brindley and carried.**

iv. Buxus Green. March invoice £495.00 (Paid)

v. HMRC £364.42 (paid legal payment part of clerk salary agreement minute 115/20 i)

vi. Income-Nettlebank £69.00

vii. Income-McGough Funeral Directors £245.00

viii. Annual governance statement to be approved. **Proposed by Cllr Shepherd and seconded by Cllr James and carried.**

ix. Authorised payments circulated to councillors were agreed and will be signed off by the council at a future meeting.

x. Current bank balances were presented to the Council.

There being no other business the meeting was closed by The Chair, Councillor Shepherd at 8.50pm.

Signed..... Chairman Wednesday 5th May 2021

Signed..... Clerk