Alton Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 13th January 2021 at 7pm
By Video Conference

Present:Councillor J. Shepherd, Councillor (Chair), Councillor P. Gwinnett, Councillor R. Wood, Councillor P. Ballard, Councillor M. Worthington (SCC).
Mr S.J. Burton (Clerk)

Apologies: Councillor E. Bailey, Councillor S. Hollins, Councillor E. James, Councillor E. Brindley, Councillor H. Plimley (SMDC).

It should be noted that three parish councillors could not attend the meeting due to the technical issues related to video conferencing.
The lengthsman was not present.
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, who welcomed the new Councillor, Diana Gardner to her first meeting.

1/21. Declarations of Interest.

i. There were no declarations of interest.

2/21. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th December 2020 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).

3/21. Matters arising.

i. There were no matters arising.

4/21. Coronavirus update regarding parish council business.

i. The clerk reported that the whole country is once again in lockdown so Covid 19 restrictions mean remote meetings will have to continue for the time being.

5/21. Lengthsman.

i. The Lengthsman was not present. The council expressed concern that she was not present to answer questions and for tasks to be allocated directly to her.
ii. Cllr Wood stated that the run-off at Town Head and Headland Way had not been cleared as requested, other work had been done but not the part he intended (minute 153/20 iv). **Action: The Lengthsman.**
iii. Cllr Wood stated it seemed excessive that it took 8 hours to clear the footpath by the war memorial and that the bag of vegetation waste is still lying near the water pump in Dimble Lane, Cllrs Gwinnett and Shepherd stated they would help if needed. **Action: Lengthsman to remove.**
iv. Cllr Gwinnett reported that leaves on the highway outside Arons Head in Uttoxeter Road need clearing. **Action: The Lengthsman.**

v. Cllr Wood reported litter needed picking up between Battlesteads and Gallows Green. **Action: The Lengthsman.**

vi. The clerk reported he had received two emails from the Lengthsman. The first explaining she could not attend the meeting as she had a conflicting Zoom family meeting. She also stated 'I have been unable to tackle Dimble Lane as we have not been able to borrow a digger over the Christmas period, however we will have access to one in the next couple of weeks' (minute 153/20 v). The second email was a request to plant Daffodils and Tulips at both ends of the village and on the bank along Lime Kiln Lane. The council require costing and precise locations from the Lengthsman for this work. **Action: The Lengthsman to provide these details at the next meeting.**

6/21. Alton Towers.

i. Nothing for this item of business. It was however noted that the resort is now being used to test people for Covid 19.

7/21. Footpaths.

i. Cllr Shepherd stated he has reported to SCC several faults on footpaths as follows.
ii. FP20 Missing fingerpost top of Dimble Lane.
iii. FP55 Missing fingerpost top at The Hurstons.
iv. FP 5 Footpath blocked by wire at jct. with road.
v. BW64 Damaged bridle gate at jct. with FP64.
vi. FP28 Path blocked at front of Wheel Farm.
vii. FP19 Missing fingerpost.
viii. Cllr Shepherd stated that as Cllr Bailey could not join virtual meetings and he has responsibility for footpaths it would be a good idea to have a temporary replacement. He proposed Cllr Gardner to take on this responsibility, this was seconded by Cllr Ballard and carried.

8/21. Village Hall.

i. Cllr Ballard reported that the village hall has received no income except the government Covid 19 grant of £10,000 since the start of the epidemic. She outlined a number of issues which have to be addressed, including replacement of rotting windows at an estimated cost of £6,785 and repairs to guttering and facia boards estimated at £4,475. The boiler may also need replacing or repair. Painting of the building at a cost of £950 has been arranged for the spring. On behalf of the village hall committee, she asked if any assistance is available.

ii. Following a discussion Cllr Ballard was advised it may be possible for the committee to apply for a further grant from the government during the current lockdown and that should be explored. The council also require more detail of the proposed work with three estimates for each job, together with a breakdown of the funds held by the village hall. The council would like the treasurer of the village hall committee to attend the next council meeting to discuss. **Action: The clerk to invite the treasurer of the village hall committee to the next meeting.**

9/21. Highways and Road Safety.

i. The clerk stated he has not received anything further from SCC regarding the new road signage in the parish. **Action: The clerk to request an update from SCC.**

ii. Cllr Wood reported that Hurstons Lane which gets very icy is not on the gritting route. He has asked Paula Lees from SCC to look into this as the route is used by people walking to the doctors surgery in Hurstons Lane.

iii. Cllr Wood has reported a pothole in Knight Lane, it has not yet been repaired.

iv. Cllr Wood stated that not all the hedges have been cut back in Dimble Lane despite letters to the residents in Shirley drive whose hedges back onto Dimble Lane. He has contacted SCC looking for a guarantee that the county council will cut the hedges if the residents do not. Cllr Worthington felt such a guarantee was unlikely to be made. A discussion took place during which the possibility of a direct approach to residents will be considered. In the meantime the clerk was asked to contact SCC Highways and get the policy on hedges growing into highways causing an obstruction/danger to road users. **Action: The clerk.**

v. Cllr Shepherd stated that he has reported a faulty street light in Saltersford Lane.

10/21. Parish Cemetery and St. Peter's Church Yard.

i. Cllr Shepherd reported the cemetery is in good order.

ii. Cllr Shepherd stated that the work to cut back the large trees in St Peters Church Yard will take place between 25th-27th January.

iii. Cllr Shepherd reported that he is waiting for the people who will re-build the dry-stone wall in the Church Yard to come back to him, so that work is not yet completed. **Action: Cllr Shepherd to follow up.**

11/21. Future Financial projects.

i. Cllr Wood started the debate stating an email with his suggestions for future work to enhance the parish had been circulated to the council. A discussion took place covering subjects such a replacing the planters in the parish. Cllr Gwinnett gave a short presentation on possible wildflower verges and new village signs, which would also help with traffic calming e.g. 'Welcome to Alton, please drive carefully'. Cllr Shepherd suggested the Victorian sewer vent pipes in Alton are part of the heritage of the parish and need restoring by cleaning and painting. He will get quotes for the council to consider. Firm proposals with costings will be presented in the coming weeks.

12/21. Planning and Licensing Applications.

i. SMD/2020/0708. West Ella Finance, Rose Cottage Bradley Lane Bradley In The Moors Alton. Installation of a Package Treatment Plant. **No objections.**

ii. SMD/2021/0003. Mr R. Simister, The Cedars, Cedarhill, Alton. Outline permission with all matters reserved for 6 new dwellings.

iii. Cllr Shepherd gave a detailed description and overview of the application. The councillors agreed to object to this application and Cllr Shepherd will prepare a letter for the clerk to submit to SMDC planning.

iv. SMD/2020/0729. Osprey Developments Ltd, 17, Bee Cottage, Saltersford Lane, Alton. Proposed internal alterations to form 2NO dwelling. **No objections. Majority vote.**

v. SMD/2020/0627. Miss Stephanie Higgs, The Hutch, Tythe Barn, Alton. A two-storey extension and a small single storey flat roof extension. **No objections. Majority vote.**

13/21. Planning decisions.

i. SMD/2020/0209. 19, Headland Way, Alton. Removal of ground floor window and replacement with a new threshold front access door and installation of a new step lift, all to facilitate access to a dwelling for a disabled person. **Approved**.

ii. SMD/2020/0606. Wyndham, Cedarhill, Alton. Replacement front porch. **Approved.**
iii. SMD/2020/0610. Toothill Cottage, Toothill Lane, Alton. New oak framed garage/carport/woodstore/mowershed building, replacing existing. **Approved.**

14/21. Parish Council Updates.

i. The Millennium Stone project. The clerk reported he has spoken to Paul Gibson, from Phoenix Tile Studio. Production of the tiles should be in the next two weeks they are en- route from Portugal. The project is slightly behind time but still on track.
ii. Cllr Shepherd reported that the slabs from the village hall to Lime Kiln Lane are now in place.

15/21. Correspondence requiring response.

i. Precept requirement from SMDC (see finance below).

16/21. Correspondence for Information.

i. Routine correspondence form SMDC, SPCA and NALC. All dealt with.
ii. Email to SMDC planning re parish council comments on planning applications.

The correspondence was read out by the Clerk.

17/20. Finance.

i. To set the precept 2021/2022. The clerk outlined the current financial position which is healthy and gave various examples of possible precepts for the council to consider depending on projects to support the parish. After a discussion Cllr Gwinnett proposed the precept be increased by a total of 2.18% taking the total precept to £16,290. A band 'D' property will pay an extra 66 pence a year, to a total of £30.97p. Cllr Shepherd seconded the proposal which was carried.
ii. Clerk salary £486.16
iii. Lengthsman wages £132.00
iv. Ford Partnership (payroll function) £222.00 (Net £185.00 VAT £37.00)
v. Buxus Green £495.00 December (paid).
vi. HMRC £364.80 (paid)
vii. Matthew J. Hooper (clean Millennium Stone and lay slabs) £80.00 paid (minute 145/20 iii).
viii. Mazars (external auditor) £240.00 (Net £200.00 VAT £40.00). Paid.
ix. Authorised payments for December 2020 were agreed and will be signed off by the council at a future meeting.
x. Current bank balances were presented to the Council.

The finances were proposed by Cllr Shepherd and seconded by Cllr Ballard and carried.

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

Signed..... Chairman Wednesday 10th February 2021

Signed..... Clerk