



ARDINGLY PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Extraordinary Ardingly Parish Council Meeting held on Saturday 21st March 2020 at 10am in the Reading Room at Hapstead Hall, Ardingly

Present

Councillor C. Hotblack (Vice Chairman)
Councillor J. Aloof
Councillor J. James
Councillor G. Taylor

In Attendance Mrs. B Cox (Parish Clerk)

A statement was made by the Clerk to all present as follows.

For the purpose of this Extraordinary Meeting in the absence of Councillor Stutchbury (Chair) Councillor Hotblack will act as Chair.

The Chair stated that item number 1548 will be discussed prior to item 1547 as item 1548 required participation by the invited members of the Public and he felt it wise that this item be discussed first so the members of the Public could be given the opportunity to leave after that item, in light of the advice issued by the Government on limiting social contact.

1545 Public Questions

There were five members of the public present who had been invited by the Parish Council to represent their organisations within the Community and one other member of the Public. There were no matters raised.

1546	Procedural Matters 1546.1 Councillors Stutchbury, Burr, Chalk, Gass, Horsman, K. James and Strutton sent their apologies. 1546.2 There were no declarations of interest in respect of any matters on the agenda.	
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1548

General Matters

1548.1 To discuss and agree the Parish Council response and any potential practical actions during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Councillor Hotblack explained to all present that the Parish Council (PC) had invited representatives of key organisations operating in the village to support those Parishioners considered vulnerable during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The PC would like to gather information such as “Who is doing what?” “Are there any gaps or overlaps in services offered?”. He reassured those present that the PC did not wish to interfere with the work of organisations but wanted to support the existing services already in place should it be required. Councillor Hotblack suggested they move round the room and each representative could explain more about their service.

Rev Crutchley explained that St Peters Church runs “At Your Service”. The service focuses on small acts of service such as shopping, transport and minor home repairs. At Your Service operates all year round. He explained they also have a pastoral team to support those Parishioners who are isolated and feeling lonely. He also explained that the Church is using its website, social media and Parish Newsletter to remind people that during this challenging time we need to think of our neighbours. Sadly, there is currently no worship at St Peters considering the government advice on social contact, things may develop to streaming services but currently that is not happening.

Rev Crutchley also mentioned that until he is told otherwise, he will be walking around the village demonstrating a ministry of presence. Councillor J. James asked if the Rev Crutchley requires anything from the PC and Rev Crutchley explained it would be helpful if the PC could host a weekly “catch up” between all the supportive organisations operating in the village to ensure they were all working together to identify and support those most vulnerable. Councillor Hotblack briefly asked the representatives from the Ardingly Support during the Coronavirus Group and Mr. Hastings from Ardingly College if they felt such a “catch up” would be useful. They all agreed it would support good communication between all support and the PC. It was **AGREED** that the Parish Council will host a weekly “virtual” meeting of all those community organisations present today (Ardingly College, Ardingly Support during the Coronavirus Group and St Peters Church).

The Clerk of Hapstead Hall raised the issue of the Hall in consideration to the Covid-19 Pandemic. He asked the PC as custodians of the hall approve the following actions.

- To cancel all bookings until the 31st May 2020
- All cancellations will not be charged, and paid bookings will be put towards future use.
- Bookings will be taken from July onwards with a Covid-19 clause re no cancellation charge.
- Keep cleaning the hall/deep clean in case the hall is needed as an Emergency Hub.

The situation would be reviewed mid-May with the PC and the Hall Clerk will send all quarterly invoices by 1st April (covering Jan-March) as usual.

The PC **APPROVED** the above detailed actions.

Harry Hastings from Ardingly College explained that the College is operating a shop from its dining hall, providing basic items which is currently only for staff but that he would confirm specific details on Monday the 23rd of March. The Clerk explained she had spoken with the Catering Manager at the College on the 20th of March and she had said that the shop is now open for all Parishioners in the village and that transport will be offered from the Village Car Park to the College Shop. She asked Mr. Hastings if Keyworkers in the village would be able to order food to pick up as their hours of work may not match up with the shop timings and they are the group struggling to get supplies. Mr. Hastings suggested that the Clerk speak directly to the Catering

Manager about her suggestion. She also explained that the catering manager had spoken about the college planning to offer cooked meals with a delivery service for those considered vulnerable but that this was a work in progress. Harry went on to explain that after the Easter Holidays the college would be open to offer childcare to College Pupils of keyworkers and that the college had been in discussion with the Head Teacher at St Peters to offer one central childcare facility for children in the village rather than have two settings open. He explained though that this was also a work in progress. Harry explained he would update the Parish Council with initiatives as they develop.

Deb Ruse from Ardingly Support during the Coronavirus Group explained that the group had used the Brownies/Guides list of Parishioners they had sent 65 Birthday Bulbs to (appx 200 names) to distribute postcards asking if these Parishioners needed support with shopping etc. She explained they had only received requests for emotional support such as phone calls or text messages to alleviate anxiety and loneliness at this time.

Kat from the same group explained that these postcards were being concentrated on non-Facebook Users as Face Book using Parishioners could use Facebook to access support from the group. She also explained an advert had been placed in the Mid Sussex Times to raise awareness. She went on to explain to the PC that currently there were appx 25 volunteers that covered specific areas so parishioners would be dealing with the volunteer for their area. Councillor J. James asked how the group is safeguarding people from fraudulent callers and maintaining social distancing. Kat explained that the volunteers do not make fact to face contact. All services are placed on the doorstep of the person and communication is done by text message/phone call. She explained the volunteers are only given an address not names and they do not enter any properties. Councillor Hotblack suggested perhaps this should be made to clear to all Parishioners using the groups services, Kat agreed and commented that she would circulate details of the Volunteers to the PC shortly. The Clerk asked Rev Crutchley if his volunteers do enter properties, he said they are of course observing social distancing where possible but for minor repairs volunteers may need to enter properties, but they are all DBS'd. Councillor Taylor remarked that this may be where the two groups can work together if someone needs support that means the volunteer would need to enter the property. Councillor Hotblack asked what support the group needs from the Parish Council. Kat reiterated she felt a weekly virtual "catch up" would be useful to maintain communication.

Councillor Hotblack asked if it would be helpful for the PC to send out a communication that gave details of the known/verified groups to the Parish Council and contact details so Parishioners could get all the information in one place. It was **AGREED** the PC would send out a communication via leaflet drop, noticeboards, posters and Facebook to this effect.

Councillor J James asked the organisations if perhaps a virtual coffee morning or similar may support those feeling lonely but Fiona Rocks supported by Deb Ruse suggested this was an option to be considered but may not be workable as those most vulnerable do not use the technology required to access such a service. Councillor Taylor asked perhaps there are other options, but it was acknowledged that any options like the above would need volunteers to facilitate them e.g. to offer technical support.

William Pradel (Hall Clerk) explained that Wakehurst is now open and free to enter. He suggested that perhaps the PC could contact Wakehurst to ask for an Elderly hour so the Elderly could access the grounds when it was less busy. It was suggested by Fiona Rocks that a publication detailing the news from Wakehurst and bus times from the village to Wakehurst may be helpful. This was noted by the Clerk.

	<p>The Chairman offered the members of the Public the opportunity to leave the meeting at this point to support the government advice of limiting social contact. All members of the Public left the meeting at this point.</p>	
<p>1547</p>	<p>Governance Matters 1547.1 To discuss and agree a scheme of delegation to allow the Parish Council to continue providing its service during the Covid-19 Pandemic.</p> <p>The Scheme of Delegation previously circulated amongst Councillors was reviewed and amended as follows.</p> <p>3.2 The Chairman *insert “and the Vice Chairman” shall be an Ex Officio member of every Committee.</p> <p>7. * Delete “Urgent Matters” *insert “Exceptional Circumstances”</p> <p>7.1 The Clerk shall consult with the Chairman of the delegated committee and/or the Chairman of the Parish Council * insert “and/or two Councillors from the delegate Committee” and those members together with the Clerk shall have delegated power to act on behalf of the Council in respect of the particular matter under consideration.</p> <p>The Scheme of delegation with the above amendments was APPROVED.</p>	
<p>1549</p>	<p>Matters of public urgent importance or for future inclusion on agenda</p> <p>1549.1 Holding Meetings during the pandemic</p> <p>Councillor J. James referenced a NALC email he had forwarded to the Clerk on the 20th of March, she stated she had yet to have eyes on the email and Councillor J. James read the relevant point of Holding Meetings aloud.</p> <p>“Holding meetings</p> <p>NALC strongly encourages councillors and staff to follow government guidance on social distancing and self-isolation. This is particularly important if anyone is in an at-risk group as identified by the guidance. We would encourage local councils to consider if they need to hold scheduled meetings at all. The health and safety of councillors, staff and the public should be your primary concern. If local councils do follow government guidance on social distancing and social isolation and so they do not hold scheduled meetings, including annual council meetings, NALC’s opinion is that the likelihood of a successful legal challenge is low.</p> <p>We are expecting government guidance on holding meetings remotely early next week, and NALC will also produce further guidance next week. In the meantime, if local councils decide to not hold meetings and take decisions by email or other remote methods NALC feels it’s likely that afterwards if there were a challenge that the courts will accept that exceptional times called for exceptional measures. In the absence of government guidance, we would suggest for now only taking decisions remotely for truly urgent issues. In this case, local councils should evidence their decision making as best they can, for example by asking councillors to confirm their votes by email to the clerk for the clerk to keep as a record of the decision.”</p> <p>Councillor Hotblack felt that this email suggested that virtual meetings could be held if it was felt necessary. The Clerk stated that this email suggested that virtual meetings had not been legitimised but had been accepted as potentially necessary by NALC in reference to “truly urgent issues” only. She explained that the legislation at this stage did not support virtual meetings and while this email did suggest the risk of legal challenge was low. It was still a risk. The Clerks comments were noted by the Councillors present. Councillor Hotblack proposed that the Parish Council took the stance that “The Parish Council believe that maintaining the continuity of service using virtual meetings during the pandemic takes precedence over holding face to face meetings against Government advice on social distancing”. This stance was APPROVED by the PC. It was</p>	

then **AGREED** that the Parish Council will, moving forward and in anticipation of NALC approval hold virtual meetings to conduct its business during the Covid-19 Pandemic

1549.2 SA25

Discussion took place amongst the Parish Council about how the SA25 Working Party could progress on reaching out to the Village in connection with their views on the reduction of the size of SA25 considering recent government advice that advises against Public Meetings. Councillor Aloof supported by Councillor J. James suggested that the PC draft a letter to MSDC a kin to the letter sent by Lindfield Rural PC re the Haywards Heath Golf Course development urging MSDC to postpone any action on the DPD as the PC could not fully involve its parishioners in the upcoming consultation process.

It was **AGREED** a letter to this effect would be drafted and emailed to Full Council for approval.