

**Draft Minutes of the Annual Meeting of
LONGHOPE PARISH COUNCIL
held online on Tuesday 04th May 2021**

PRESENT: Cllrs. G Nicholas (Chair), A Toomey and T Beard

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr I Barrett (Clerk), and 54 local residents

1. Election of the Chair and Vice Chair for 2021/2022

Cllr Gary Nicholas was elected unopposed as Chairman of the council for 2020/2022, and Cllr Audrey Toomey was elected unopposed as Vice chairman of the council for 2021/2022.

A local resident challenged the meeting taking place prior to the elections scheduled for 06 May 2021. It was explained that the legislation allowing meetings to be held virtually expires on 06 May 2021, and thereafter all meetings would have to be held face to face. It was further explained that this was not an ordinary election year; the elections were being held as a result of casual vacancies. As such, the parameters placed on the Annual General Meeting of the Council, in an election year, did not apply. Elections following a casual vacancy had been suspended as a result of governmental direction due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The District Council monitoring officer had advised that, if authorities had concerns about the safe conduct of the Annual Council meeting, that this should be conducted before the sunset date of 06 May 2021. It was further stated that legislation does not allow the conduct of hybrid meetings whereby councillors can join in remotely if they prefer not to attend in person. If Councils have the means, the meeting could be broadcast such that councillors can watch. However, they would be unable to participate in discussions or vote, and the same would go for the public, who could watch but not ask questions in public participation or comment.

2. There were no apologies for absence.
3. There were no declarations of interest.
4. There was no discussion in Public Forum

5. Planning

The planning report had been circulated to Councillors. One planning application required consideration.

P0774/21/FUL Treetops, Old Monmouth Road. Change of use from a single family dwellinghouse to a mixed use as a single family dwellinghouse and the operation of a dog grooming parlour (within the existing garage). Alterations to the external appearance of the garage by the insertion of a window and door. Erection of 1.8 m high close boarded fencing part of which would be adjacent to the highway.

The Parish Council had visited the site and had no objections in principle, provided the applicant. It was suggested that the site may benefit from a visit by the District Council Planning Committee.

6. Annual Meeting Agenda Items from Standing Orders

- i. Cllr Nicholas will deliver his acceptance of office form as Parish Chairman when conditions permit.
- ii. The minutes of the meetings of the Council from 12 April 2021 and 19 April 2021 were agreed as true records to be signed when conditions permit.
- iii. The following functions would be delegated to committees, sub-committees, or individuals: Flooding; Highways and Transport; Environment; Snow Warden; Emergency Planning; Police Liaison; Staffing; IT & Data Protection; Health & Dementia; Latchen Rooms; Planning Committee; Disability and Accessibility Committee; Finance Committee; Charities; Allotments; Byways; May Hill; Playground Refurbishment; Jubilee Celebrations; Youth Activities; Rose Barton & Margaret Skelton Trust; Footpaths and Public Rights Of Way.
- iv. Reviewing the terms of reference for the committees would be a responsibility for the committee once formed.
- v. The current councillors would retain their existing responsibilities. Responsibilities remaining vacant will be distributed amongst Council Members after the forthcoming elections.
- vi. The establishment of any new committees will be deferred.
- vii. The Council was content with the appropriate standing orders and financial regulations.
- viii. The clerk reported that the confirmation of the Service Level agreement with the District Council had been received and that this was in place until 31 March 2024.
- ix. A representative to the Latchen Room Committee had to be appointed.
- x. The Clerk reported that he maintained a running asset register. It was noted that the Council now owned only two bus shelters as the A40 shelter had been demolished.
- xi. The Clerk confirmed that insurance was in place which covered both the Parish and the Recreation Ground. Renewal date is 31 September 2021.
- xii. The Council confirmed continuing membership of the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) and the Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association (GPFA).
- xiii. The Council was content with the current Complaints procedure
- xiv. The Council confirmed that the procedure in the event of receiving requests under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts would remain extant; advice would be sought from the District Council monitoring officer.
- xv. The policy of councillors speaking to the media rather than the clerk was confirmed, with individual councillors being careful to direct press enquiries to the chairman
- xvi. It was agreed that the full Parish Council would meet on the third Monday of every month at 7 pm during 2021/2022, with the exception of August and December, unless required. The venue for the meetings would be the Pavilion at the Recreation Ground.

7. Members Reports

Cllr Toomey reported that a resident of May Hill was continuing to press for a speed limit to be placed on roads which led through Longhope, May Hill and Taynton. Cllr Toomey requested that this item be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of the Council.

Cllr Nicholas reported that the play equipment, purchased with the aid of a grant from the County Council, had been delivered. The Playground Refurbishment Committee will continue to seek quotes for additional works, and provide updates when available.

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8. Date of the Annual Parish Meeting

The Local Government Act of 1972 states that every English parish must have a Parish Meeting which is to assemble annually on some day between 01 March and 01 June (both inclusive) in every year. No legislation was in place to rescind this requirement, notwithstanding the current situation concerning Covid-19. Furthermore, the allowance to hold a virtual meeting had been revoked and therefore a face to face meeting would be required. It was therefore proposed that a nominal Annual Parish Meeting be conducted on 01 June 2021 with an agenda item of a deferral to a later date in 2021, in the anticipation that Step 4 (removal of all legal limits on social contact) of England's road map out of Covid lockdown will have been by then implemented.

9. Clerk's Report & Correspondence

- Dementia. The clerk had received notification from the Forest of Dean Dementia Action Alliance concerning an initiative whereby people can post images of their favourite place on a website, for a nominal contribution to the Alliance. This is in memory of a local photographer who sadly lost his wife to dementia. The clerk had also separately received notification of Dementia Awareness week taking place 10 to 14 May 2021. It was considered that it would be useful to publicise these events, being mindful of the impact of dementia.
- The clerk informed the Council that the District Council had notified him that the election for the casual vacancy for the Parish Council, caused by the resignation of Cllr Collins would take place on 17 June 2021. The necessary actions would be initiated following the elections on 06 May 2021.
- A local resident had written to inform the clerk that the details of the Parish Council displayed on a notice board in Hopeswood Park was considerably out of date, along with an offer to update the details. It was stressed that this was a private notice board, and did not belong to the Council. Nevertheless, it was considered that it would be useful to post details once the new councillors had been elected.

10. Finance

There were no invoices requiring payment approval at this juncture.

The financial report had been circulated to Councillors. The initial projection was that the year end balance would be in the order of £10,700, based on the current budget. However, the clerk noted that the budget was carrying a significant financial risk. Although there was a budget line for elections, the cost to the Parish was unquantifiable. It was to be understood that the costs of any election for the benefit of the Parish were recovered from the Parish by the District Council. The elections on 06 May 2021 would be a shared cost for all participating elements albeit how these were to be apportioned was not known. The cost of the Parish Councillor election on 17 June 2021 would be borne solely by the Parish. If it was an uncontested election this could be in the order of several hundred pounds; if the election was contested the clerk had been informed that

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the cost could be in the region of three thousand pounds. Although the Council budget was carrying a reserve it was considered sensible to carry a fall back amount. The Council were therefore urged not to commit to any large scale expenditure until the cost of the elections had been determined.

The clerk was finalising the accounts for 2020/2021 and was waiting for the final bank statement.

Notification had been received from the external auditor as to the timelines for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. Submission was required by 30 June 2021.

The clerk reported that he had made a minor adjustment to the budget for 2021/2022 and that the contribution previously received to the Recreation Ground Path Project had been identified as a separate budgetary line.

Next Meeting – To be held on Monday 21 June 2021 at 7 pm in the Pavilion at the Recreation Ground.

Signed:.....Chairman. Date:.....