**20/OCT**

**ASTWOOD & HARDMEAD PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES**

Meeting held via Zoom on **Thursday 22nd October 2020** at 8 pm

**Attended:** Chair John Durden, Cllr Teresa Giddings, Cllr Piers Shedden, Cllr Andrea Jones, Cllr Sarah Evans-Parker, Cllr Rebecca Geldart & Tracey Young (Clerk)

**Ward Cllr’s:** David Hosking

The Chair welcomed the new Clerk and thanked her for her work so far along with Cllr Jones

**1. Apologies for absence**

None

**2. To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda**

Cllr Shedden declared an interested on a planning item

**3. To agree the Annual Report & Accounts**

The Chair received the internal audit report and was happy with the report along with the accounts. The Chair signed the AGAR to be published on the website. Action website

**4. Public Question Time**

5 members of public & Chair Derek Phillips from NHP were present on Zoom

**5. To approve the minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last Parish Council meeting held on the 17th September 2020 were approved by the Chair

**6. Chairman’s Report**

The Chair was co-opted recently. He had has lived in the village over 20 years, and had been to many PC Meetings, but noted that he had plenty to learn about his role. He thanked the departing Cllrs for all their time and hard work.

Cllr Shedden commented that he felt the spate of recent resignations were due to too many meetings, and too much time taken on them. He thought this could be the reason Cllr Geldart had resigned from both the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Committee

The Chair agreed, and confirmed that as the Parish was small, he thought only quarterly meetings were necessary. He thanked Cllr Geldart for all the work she had put in. In addition he thanked all those involved with the Neighbourhood Plan Committee and Derek Phillips who had agreed to take over the chairmanship.

The Neighbourhood Plan is now with MK Council, who are checking that it complies with all the statutory requirements. We have no control over how long this will take.

The Village hall committee look after the VH and the Village Green Garden, the VH committee will be meeting in November to discuss whether the Village Hall can will be re-opened.

The Pilot Recycling Scheme begins on Monday 26th October. The Chair attended an on online meeting with Penny Fletcher, notes of the meeting will be placed on the website & notice boards. Action JD

**7. Clerks Financial Report (authorise cheques) (10 mins)**

The Clerk sent the payment list to Cllr Jones and the Chair earlier today. Cllr Jones has the cheque book and asked the 2 signatories to sign the cheques tomorrow.

**8. Ethics & Conduct**

Cllr Evans-Parker asked for guidance from the Ward Councillor and has put together a statement which she read out.

**Statement from Cllr S Evans-Parker**
I would like to discuss the issue of Ethics and conduct within Parish council business.

I’m unsure how to have dealt with the following situation in a better way and I have put together a short statement and have asked for it to be minuted to provide transparency and I'm hoping the Ward councillors can advise or provide some guidance.

An individual informed myself and others that they were going to act unethically in regards to the neighbourhood plan, a Parish Council activity in which they were involved. I verbally and via a written message insisted that they do not do this and assumed that would be the end of the matter.

However the following week I went on holiday with my family. They then went on TO act unethically and in addition caused damage to my property in excess of £1500

I’ve since been informed that they understated the damage that they did and also accused me of intimidating and bullying behaviour which is absolutely not true.

In truth myself and other Parish council members identified and fixed the issues maintaining the integrity of the neighbourhood plan, we tightened the process so the same could not happen again.

So in short my point is I joined the PC to put in place the playground I never anticipated I might find myself in this situation. I know, if this occurred within the corporate work place it would be totally unacceptable however I felt totally unequipped to deal with this situation.

I recently placed a message on social media during a brave/foolish moment. I was frustrated that they had been untruthful of the situation and I felt unheard and let down that doing the right thing by the village had come at such personal expense to myself especially as it’s been a very challenging year for me.  Ironically however in sending this message it has resulted in the minutes now accurately reflecting the situation however, I was still blocked from attending a call to discuss the situation last week.

I want to understand if myself or another is in a similar situation what advice and support can the ward or MK council provide to assist in this situation as I would never want to go through something similar again

The Chair advised that he was not an expert but held up a report showing the 7 principles of Ethics & Integrity, he added that it was unfortunate this happened and that Social media should not have been used to discuss Parish matters. The Chair added that this was possibly an overreaction, Cllr Sarah disagreed and asked whether there was a policy for whistle blowing. Cllr Hoskings added that the Nolan Principles are how Cllrs should behave and not sure of the situation but the Principles are how members of the Public Office should follow. Cllr Hoskings could not comment any further but suggested that this could be a criminal matter and suggested contacting the Monitoring Officer at MKC.

**9. NHP**

Derek Phillips, the new chairman, advised that the Plan were now at the final draft and thanked Cllr Geldart for all her hard work. The next meeting is the 11th November and they will discuss marketing the plan to all the residents. Due to Covid, 19, the Village Hall events cannot be arranged, which will be a challenge for the team.

**10. Planning Applications**

The Chair reported that over 20 letters of objection for the 5 proposed houses at Cranfield Road, went into MKC., but there was no indication yet as to how MK Planning were proposing to deal with it.

Cllr Shedden commented on the recent application he has put in for farm outbuildings at Hardmead. Some outbuildings were converted into offices 7 years ago, and the next section will be converted into more offices for renting out. As the buildings are adjacent to a listed building, no alterations will be made to the exterior.

Cllr Jones said that information requested from the promoters of The proposed Solar Farm on the Bedford side of the village Had not been received. It was agreed to monitor, and to look out for the formal Planning Application.

**11. Crime Report**

Arlene reported that there was 1 traffic accident between July & October which involved a motorbike.

Arlene added that the Speed Watch equipment would be collected and a community Speed Watch would be undertaken by Pat and herself

Pat will be retiring therefore the current PSOs will be taking on the villages west or Olney.

**12. Traffic Calming**

Cllr Shedden emailed Cllr Hoskings regarding cars over taking farm vehicles, Cllrs Hoskings has no update but will come back with information.

The cycle event has expressed some concern as they race through the village. Cllr Shedden asked whether there was a Risk Assessment or any signage. Cllr Hoskings commented that this had been raised before and will look back to see if there is anything that can be done. Action Cllr Hoskings.

**13. Social Media**

The Chair asked that Councillors be aware that the Village Whatsapp should not be used regarding council business.

**14. Village Hall & Village Green Garden**

The Hall Committee is applying for further grants to get the remaining windows replaced. There was a working party recently that has tidied up the garden, winterised the village planters and planted further daffs and other bulbs in the village verges.

**15. Play Area**

Cllr Evans-Parker suggested football posts for older children as the VAT money has been received. The Chair asked what the village wanted next, Cllr Evans-Parker suggested speaking to parents.

A villager added that the planning application went through which was to take into account a number of factors which were implemented but the residents would like to be kept informed.

Cllr Giddings commented that maintenance men were at the playground yesterday, Cllr Evans-Parker added that this would most likely be the annual maintenance check.

Janet asked for an update with regards to what was spent and how much was left on the playground. Janet also asked what the VAT value received was, Cllr Jones commented that it was just over £3k.

The Chairman agreed that no further development would take place without the Parish Council publicising what was proposed.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

Next meeting to be held on the 14th January at 8pm. Finance meeting to be held first at 7pm