

ARDLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL



**Minutes of the Meeting of Ardleigh Parish Council held on
Monday 6 April 2020 by remote Zoom link at 7.30pm**

PRESENT Cllr Barrott (Chair), Cllrs Bolingbroke, Chase-Gardener, Fontaine, Marshall, Mason, Talbot, Thompson and Whitfield. Clerk- Rachel Fletcher

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE Cllr Guglielmi (Essex County Council) until item 20/58.1

20/053 Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed those attending the first remote meeting of the Council. It was confirmed that this meeting would focus on urgent business and agree arrangements to delegate powers and decisions to allow for the smooth running of the Council and for timely decision making during the Covid-19 pandemic.

20/054 Apologies and reasons for absence

None.

20/055 Declaration of Interests

None were declared.

20/056 Public participation session relating to items on the agenda or other matters of mutual interest

Members of the public had been asked to email their questions and comments to the Council in advance of the meeting, none were received. One enquiry had been received from a potential Councillor which the Chair would follow up. It was noted that guidance on operation of remote council meetings had now been issued and that future meetings would be open to the public- anyone wishing to attend would be asked to contact the Clerk to obtain the relevant links and passwords.

20/057 Delegation of decisions

It was **resolved** to extend the delegation of Council decisions to the Clerk during the period of restricted activity in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic such delegation to enable to Council to fulfil its responsibilities and carry out its functions. It was noted that powers could be delegated to an officer and that, wherever practical, as many councillors as possible would be consulted.

It was **resolved** that the Clerk would have the delegated power to make payments, respond to urgent requests and comment on matters of interest to the Council having consulted, where practical, with at least two councillors and ideally with all.

20/058 Reports and Correspondence

20/58.1 It was confirmed that regular reports received from District and County Councillors or the police, plus key updates from other organisations would be forwarded to members by email.

Cllr Guglielmi noted that this was the first remote Parish Council meeting he had attended. He would endeavour to send a weekly update on matters relating to the County and District Council (DC), the first having been circulated prior to the meeting. Key points including the Tendring DC emergency number, 01255 686700 for support vulnerable people- to be put on the web site

Many ongoing matters were on hold and would have to be picked up later. Concern was expressed about some recent planning decisions on Harwich Road which were previously land settlements- made under delegated powers. Cllr Guglielmi would liaise with relevant TDC officers about how the planning committee would operate during lockdown.

Concerns were expressed about increased Fly Tipping. It was noted that Essex County Council (ECC) civic amenity sites were an early casualty of the lockdown. Cllr Guglielmi confirmed that TDC would do their best to deal with fly tipping but that this had a financial cost and diverted staff from other work. TDC would be monitoring the costs in order to discuss further with ECC. Details of reported Fly Tipping should be copied to our district and county councillors.

It was noted that no minutes had been received from Tendring District Association of Local Councils

20/58.2 **Clerk's report**- A verbal report was given on key correspondence and tasks undertaken since the last meeting, much of which was as a result of the pandemic and changing guidance, expectations and news. The Clerk had been participating in Clerk's forums, checking and sharing guidance (to councillors, the Helpline and/or Facebook and/or web pages).

Thanks were noted to those involved in the production and distribution of the Ardleigh Advertiser which had included prominent promotion of Dedham and Ardleigh helpline (01206 322025). Updates with details of Parish Council contacts, new website and details of meetings and information about the helpline had also been placed on all noticeboards. It was noted that several noticeboards needed an overhaul.

It was noted that a grant of £1160 had been confirmed by Tesco. The application had been for fencing around the Colchester Road Play Area which had now been completed so an alternative project which would benefit the community would need to be identified.

The old website was taken down on 31 March and the new one www.ardleigh.website was active. Any edits required should be notified to the Clerk. Facebook engagement was mostly up on the previous month. There were now 168 page followers and 147 page likes. Reach was 892 (down from 1145), engagements 467 (244), new page likes 17 (0). 29 (7) posts had been published over the previous 28 days.

The Parish Council archive had been transferred from the previous Clerk's address and were now stored by Cllr Thompson.

Other previously agreed actions were on hold such as Mental Health first aid training, the Great British Spring Clean, Coffee with Cops. VE75 celebrations had also been postponed since the last meeting.

It was **resolved** to ratify the emergency decisions taken since the last meeting including closure of play areas and exercise equipment, reduction in numbers permitted to attend graveside funerals at the Cemetery and making funds available to support the operation of the Dedham and Ardleigh Helpline. A rolling record of emergency and delegated decisions would be kept and the link shared with members.

20/059 Minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 9 March 2020

These were accepted as a true and accurate account of the proceedings of the meeting

20/060 Planning

Applications and appeals The following comments were noted on the applications below.

20/00359/OUT 17 Coggeshall Road Ardleigh Colchester Essex CO7 7LP

Construction of three detached dwellings. *The Council wished to object to this application as it fell outside the defined settlement development boundary.*

20/00007/OUT Woodland Lodge Spring Valley Lane Ardleigh Colchester Essex CO7 7SD

Outline planning application with all matters reserved for a single storey residential dwelling on land adjacent Woodland Lodge. *This had been considered at the previous meeting.*

20/00401/TPO Ash Lodge Mary Warner Road Ardleigh 7RP

1 No. Maple - Trim overhanging branches on Forge Court. *No comment*

20/061

There was a discussion about how feedback on planning applications and appeals would be dealt with during the pandemic. As remote meetings were now permitted the council would continue to consider applications at its meetings and comment thereafter. In the event that quorate meetings could not be held comments would be gathered and a proposed response confirmed by email.

Decided

It was noted that details of all applications and decisions (approvals, refusals and discharges of conditions) were on the TDC website <https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/planning/planning-applications>, weekly updates would be forwarded to members. Individual decisions would no longer be reported to meetings.

20/062 Parish Council Finance

20/062.1 The Parish Council Financial Statement and draft end of year accounts as at end March 2020 were noted. The year-end position was slightly better than budget and recent forecasts. The VAT which had been reclaimed in February was credited in March and more than £45,000 of grant

funding received from GCG Environment Trust for village hall refurbishments. Thanks were noted to GCG Environment Trust for their support to this project.

20/062.2 It was confirmed that the Clerk would prepare for internal audit and AGAR recognising that some processes may change in light of current circumstances. The appointment of internal auditors, Heelis and Lodge, at a cost of £260, was confirmed.

20/062.3 To following bills for payment for Parish Council and Village Hall were approved by the Council. In place of signatures, email confirmation from signatories was provided, for the financial records. Changes to the pension contribution rate and the tax-free working from home allowance paid to the Clerk were noted.

Parish Council payments

Archivist expenses	£159.71
Clerk's expenses	£169.22
EALC	£536.24
JF Tree Specialist	£1,608.00
Cemetery reimbursement	£31.98

Village Hall refurbishment- grant funded

Payments totalling £43,992.20 to 6 approved suppliers to be reimbursed by GCG environment trust were also individually approved	£43,992.20
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Continuous authority confirmed for salaries and associated costs

Salaries (Clerk and Caretaker) based on employment contracts including tax, national insurance and pension- or amount as required following payroll calculation	£1452.98
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Village Hall

Bookings & Cleaning – reimburse APC	£594.31
A-Z Supplies	£83.99
Rates	491.52

20/062.4 It was confirmed that future bills received during periods between Council meetings could be paid by the Clerk subject to obtaining email agreement of Chairman and Vice Chairman (or in their absence any two councillors) and reported to the next meeting.

20/063 Neighbourhood Plan

There had been little progress since the previous meeting due to the pandemic, but it was confirmed that preparation work could continue remotely during shutdown period including submitting funding application (prepared by Planning Direct) and preparing a draft survey. A decision on the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area was expected to be made via delegated powers. Remote meetings of the working group could be held as required.

20/064 Village Hall

20/044.1 It was noted that the Village Hall was closed. The Caretaker was undertaking regular checks and CCTV was being regularly checked remotely. The Village Hall committee would not be meeting separately at the present time with any urgent matters dealt with through the Council. The refurbishment work had been almost completed and the bulk of grant funds received. Thanks were noted to Cllrs Thompson and Talbot, in particular, for their efforts in delivering the project.

It was confirmed that an application for Business Rates Relief/ Business Support Grant would be submitted and that the Village Hall budget would need to be reworked in the light of the enforced closure and any grant income received.

It was agreed to use the period of closure to continue to undertake maintenance and improvement works including deep cleaning, checking recent damage to the floor, sorting cupboards, updating policies and procedures, including key holders' policy.

It was agreed that there was a need to allocate a new disabled parking bay close to the new accessible toilet and to consider improvements to the car park.

It was noted that updates to Hallmaster had not been possible since the last meeting, but it was

hoped that further work to update bookings procedures could be prioritised in the forthcoming weeks and months.

20/065 Covid-19 issues and community response

An update was given on current issues. The Dedham and Ardleigh Helpline had been launched with weekly update meetings held remotely with Rev Wilson and the Chair of Dedham Parish Council. Around 40 deliveries were being made each week, mostly prescriptions. The Council confirmed its support of the Helpline, including offering grant funding if required and requested.

The Ardleigh Advertiser had been used to circulate important updates including to those without access to the internet. There was a discussion about whether the next edition would be online only, and it was agreed that the Council could offer financial support/ sponsorship for the next issue or for a more basic newsletter. Updates could include details of financial support (eg Citizens Advice, Ardleigh Parochial Charity) and directory of local services and shops available during lockdown. Cllr Barrott would liaise with the Ardleigh Advertiser team.

It was noted that individual members of the council along with many members of the community were providing support to neighbours and volunteering. Individuals were helping each other but the council was concerned to ensure that any gaps were identified, and that needs were being and continued to be met.

20/066 Health and Safety-Recreation, Play and Open Spaces, Millennium Green

It was noted that in line with government guidance all play and exercise equipment was closed with notices in place. It was confirmed that checks on condition of play areas and equipment would continue where practicable with reports to be forwarded to the Clerk by email or post. Urgent health and safety concerns to be brought to the attention of the Clerk or Chair without delay.

It was noted that most people seemed to be complying with social distancing requirements. CCTV in the village hall and recreation ground car park was in place if needed.

20/067 Churchyard & Cemetery

It was noted that a restriction of 10 mourners was now in place and that further restrictions would follow any new guidance issued. The lack of available plots in the Cemetery had been cause of concern for some time and the pandemic was expected to sadly highlight this need.

The Council **resolved** to continue its efforts to identify suitable cemetery space and instruct a surveyor to advise if necessary.

20/068 Meeting Closure, Date of next meeting

Next scheduled meeting Monday 11 May 2020, 7.30pm. The meeting was expected to be held via Zoom with members of the public invited to contact the Clerk to obtain an invitation/ password for the meeting. The May meeting is normally the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council and is the meeting where the chairman and any other office holders are elected. Parish Councils are not required to hold annual meetings this year, and the existing post holder(s) would then continue.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.