

NEWPORT PARISH COUNCIL**Minutes of a Meeting of the Council held at 7.30pm on
Monday 7th September, 2020 by Zoom**

<u>Present:</u>	Cllr H. Bowman	(HB)	(Chairman)
	Cllr D. Alexander	(DA)	
	Cllr S. Amos	(SAm)	
	Cllr S. Ayles	(SAy)	
	Cllr J. Emanuel	(JE)	
	Cllr S. Naik	(SN)	
	Cllr A. Sampson	(AS)	

In attendance:

Mrs C. Griffin	Parish Clerk
Mrs E. Edwards	Responsible Financial Officer
Dist Cllr N. Hargreaves	(NH)
Cty Cllr R. Gooding	(RG)
Community Special Constable	
1 member of the public	

20/337 Apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllr S. Burton (private commitment) and Cllr A. Gerard (private commitment), Cllr R. Bengé (unable to connect to Zoom)

20/338 To receive any 'pecuniary' or 'non-pecuniary' interests relating to items on the Agenda

The following non-pecuniary interests were declared:
SN in 347 and 349; SAm in 340; SAy in 347; AS in 347; JE in 346, 347, 348 and 349;
HB in 340, 342 and 343.

20/339 Public participation session (To discuss questions sent to the Clerk, by email from members of the public)

- The Clerk advised that a resident of Whiteditch Lane asked her to pass on her appreciation for the work that Chris Barnes undertook on behalf of the residents whilst on the PC.

20/340 To receive a report from our Community Special Constables

The Community Special Constable had sent the following report:

Speed checks with 4 tickets for speeding
2 local patrols tackling anti-social behaviour
1 noise complaint investigation

2 intelligence reports submitted

1 drugs patrol following reports submitted from local residents. (These will be stepped up in coming weeks).

The second Community Special Constable (CSC) for Newport attended the meeting, He gave details of his career before retirement and said he decided to join the Community Special Constables as he wanted to put something back into the community. He started in February and is currently on a personal development plan. He will not be independent until the end of the year. He had looked at the database and Newport had a low crime rate although there may be low level incidents, ie parking,, which are not included. Reports to 101 which require a Police Officer are on the database including mental health incidents and missing persons. When CSC are on duty they have to report how many hours of patrol are carried out.

The Chairman apologised for not attending the meeting earlier today, but welcomed the new Community Special Constable. More Police presence in the village will be a great help and advantage.

20/341 To receive reports from District and County Councillors

Dist Cllr Neil Hargreaves had sent the following report:

The three big stories are the proposals from the government to

- Take away from local council control the granting of outline planning permission
- Increase the new housing requirement on Uttlesford from 14,000 to about 22,000 houses
- Abolish county and district councils and replace them with mid-sized 'unitary' councils, but with an elected mayor at county level (despite the county not existing any more)

Local government proposals

A White Paper is awaited but the proposals are said to be partly to reduce costs. The proposal for Essex is to split it into three authorities which would cover all functions. This would presumably mean splitting all the Essex functions such as highways, education, social care, libraries and waste disposal into three. This must surely increase costs not decrease them. (Concerning waste disposal, although UDC collects it, it is transferred to Essex at a site near Dunmow and the recycling is done elsewhere by the county).

To put this in perspective most of the local authority costs are County. UDC's precept is only about 9% of the total council tax, and the vast range of UDC council services cost tax payers about £140 per person per year. As our commercial investment strategy builds up, the cost to tax payers will fall to about £104 per person a year. The Essex precept is 72% of the total and the other 19% is fire, police and parish. There would also be an elected Essex mayor, and a mayoral department with the power to have a council tax precept to fund itself, despite Essex County Council no longer existing. So, the reorganisation would not even remove a governance layer. If say the three councils were under Labour, Conservative and independent control

respectively, and all taking different views, there would not even be a coherent political structure. The removal of district councils would also reduce local accountability. Each councillor would need to cover a much wider area, and being in a much larger council would have less influence. Local residents groups like R4U without a national footprint probably could not run a council and the change would certainly concentrate power with Labour or the Conservatives to the exclusion of smaller groups. R4U's deputy leader raised this in a meeting with the minister and he declined to discuss it. The reduction in the number of councillors per resident would increase workload. I can't see it being particularly attractive to be a councillor with a responsibility for everything, having to go say to Harlow for council meetings and be in a minority in a large council controlled by one of the two big parties, and probably having to deal with decisions on matters irrelevant to here.

The current structure was set up nearly 50 years ago. Any mass reorganisation would be very costly and disruptive and difficult to manage. I have worked on take overs and an amalgamation of two large companies. This however, would be integrating not just two entities, but several district councils into one and adding a third of a county council (in disarray) on top, and a mayoralty on top of that. The IT implications of this alone are eye wateringly complex. In a business you have the advantage of executive power to mandate decisions, but in the local authority world life is more complex with the officers reporting to a chief executive, and a separate political structure headed by a council leader, and with each party having its own leader.

The financial implications are also complex. The tax take per head varies widely across the county and Uttlesford is the largest. And as we continue to build our commercial investments, we will shortly have a major part our services funded from this income rather than from taxation. I'm not sure we would be happy, having worked hard to set all this up, to have the assets and income handed over. Nor should local taxpayers be required to have responsibility for any legacy financial issues which may exist in other authorities.

I think local authorities, despite years of funding cuts, have handled the tasks and responsibilities for covid much better than some government ministries (except the Treasury). A government that has not yet resolved Brexit, or any other trade deals, has to address global warming, and corona virus and the eye-watering government debt, which may end up triggering the break-up of the Union, and couldn't even deal reasonably with exam results, needs to sort itself out before casting around elsewhere.

This does however raise the issue of the urgently needed reform of Essex County Council. Although some parts may run efficiently my view is we are ill-served on highways (projects, maintenance and planning responses) and education (provision of places, and school transport –not issues for particularly for Newport, but very much so across the district) and even things like the proposed library closures were handled in a particularly unimaginative way and resulted in an FOI to get basic cost information and eventually a complete climb down.

I noted above that UDC provides a very large range of services. Many are not obvious such as being the Port Authority for Stansted Airport, and thus dealing with Brexit changes, or being the authority which could need to attend at an exhumation.

I am guessing these government proposals will in the end get buried, but in the meantime they are consuming valuable senior officer time.

UDC Finances and Covid funding

UDC will need to agree a revised budget for the remainder of the year because of reductions in various incomes. Some extra funding has been received from the government, and the good news is the commercial investment strategy has continued at full pace despite Covid, thus bringing in extra revenues this year which were not anticipated until future years. So the books remain balanced, but the mix of costs and revenues will be somewhat different from that anticipated in the council's budget

A whole raft of extra tasks has been completed on behalf of the government and some of these continue. UDC as the end of August has paid out £18.6m to 1,550 small businesses across the district and those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector. Additionally, £938k has been paid in discretionary grants to 126 businesses. The story for council housing is not as good, because on becoming vacant the houses are stripped and cleaned and heavy maintenance work done if needed. This has not been possible on the scale needed and so houses have not been returned to use at the normal speed, which also impacts UDC housing finances as no rent is received while empty

Proposed changes to the planning system

These have been widely publicised so not dealt with in detail here. Their consequences would be far reaching and damaging. These also seem not to have been thought through. The housing numbers per district are calculated by another 'algorithm' with no intelligent oversight or review of the outcomes. The government did not actually run the figures – it was the property business Lichfields which ran it all and showed how it would cut building in cities, and in the north, and vastly increase it in the rural south east. This is the very opposite of the north-south 'levelling up' policy, or of sustainability as rural existence is almost entirely dependent on travel by car. The numbers for UDC would be the equivalent of building about three Saffron Walden's. Although, if control over housing permissions is largely removed from councils and left in the hands of landowners and developers, it is unclear whether mandated requirements would have any significance if there is no body with the power to implement them.

With no compulsion on developers to build it is not even clear it would achieve its aim of building more houses – developers restrict supply to keep prices high and their supply chain costs down.

NH advised that there is an issue with one policy on the Neighbourhood Plan and it is going back to consultation.

Cty Cllr Ray Gooding sent the following report:

Normally in September we see the return of children with excitement and some trepidation. However, with all that has happened this year that process is much more complicated than usual and the preparations that schools have had to make to

welcome the children back has been far more extensive and significantly different from every other year. I would like to thank School Leaders, teachers and other staff for all the work they have done to plan for this and ensure that schools are safe and welcoming places. This is particularly relevant in Newport where both JFA and the Parish have made considerable efforts to ensure that distancing and the “Bubbles” from within the school are maintained when boarding the busses. At the same time using the station carpark to ensure that Bury Water Lane is as clear as possible and children can safely walk “the last mile”. An outstanding example of community working by the parish and the school.

Schools across the County are now open and children are returning after an extended time at home and I know that the excitement at the return is shared not only by the children who can again meet with their friends and recommence their education but also by the teachers who are looking forward to welcoming everybody back.

It is my hope that all children will return to school without any concerns but one of the questions I am asked is whether parents will be fined if they elect not to bring their children back. My response to that question is that if, as a parent, you are concerned you must speak with the head of your child’s school. Clearly, if you are shielding a member of your family or have other reasons not to return then that does need to be recorded so that assistance can be provided. However, the education of our children is such an important matter that it is necessary for head teachers to retain the ability to refer families where adequate reasons for non-attendance are a concern.

There is a great deal of information available to parents at this time and if your child is starting Reception this year then the TLC facebook page may be helpful. And if getting to school is a problem then the StopSwapGo website will give you information on all you need to know.

RG thanked JE for making arrangements for children to be dropped off and collected from the Railway Station car park which was very helpful. He pointed out that this facility may be required for more than six weeks.

RG will follow up the extension of the “H” bars outside Belmont Farmhouse as an issue has arisen with the NE Parking Partnership.

RG will supply statistics for Covid 19 in the area.

20/342 To approve and authorise the Chairman to sign the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 3rd August 2020 (by Zoom)

It was resolved that the Chairman should sign the minutes as approved.

Proposed: SAy

Seconded: AS

All agreed

20/343 Chairman's comments

The Chairman thanked Rob Willis for all the work he has carried out on the Common. He has done a tremendous amount of work keeping it tidy which has been greatly appreciated.

20/344 To receive the Clerk's Report, circulated prior to the meeting

Duly received.

Drainage work on the River Cam

A letter has been sent to Advance Fuel Systems in Station Road and Network Rail asking if they would be willing to make a contribution to the costs of removing the silt from the river. **Advance Fuel Systems do not want to get involved and are happy with the regular monitoring by the Environment Agency.**

Telephone Box in Station Road - BT have informed UDC that the kiosk outside the Village Hall in Station Road (01799 541992) is not being used enough for them to carry on running it. In view of this BT would like to remove. The Parish Council can agree, adopt or object, but if you object you will need to state the grounds on which you are objecting. **It was agreed this should be removed.**

New bollards at the bottom of School Lane - Two quotations have been obtained for installing these, one from Hermitage Fencing and one from Hilbery Turf.

Planning - The report 'Planning for the Future' from Sarah Nicholas, Planning Officer at UDC was circulated on 28th August. We then received an email from Richard Haynes of CPRE. Councils are being encouraged to reply to the consultation.

Frambury Fields - Trivselhus were advised that the PC approved the two street names - Banwell Mews and Dawson Green.

Following my conversation with the resident of Frambury Lane who lives adjacent to the site he came into the office last week as Trivselhus had not been in touch with him. I passed his details to Phase2planning again and asked them to ensure he was contacted.

SAM and HB attended a meeting with the UDC Planning Committee on 14th August when Trivselhus gave a further presentation to the Committee.

Ardent Consulting Engineers are now working on the proposed options and have contacted the Environment Agency for information. Philip Rogers, Drainage Consultant, who was previously engaged by the Ellis Trust, has sent Ardent a drainage design report.

Planning - Compass database - I advised Chloe, Planning and Projects Development Officer, at Saffron Walden Town Council that members were looking at the Compass database.

Planning Working Group - I have been asked to re-circulate the process agreed when the PWG was set up:

1. The Clerk will distribute all new planning applications received from UDC to all Councillors, via email.
2. JE will add and maintain the spreadsheet.
3. The Planning Working Group (PWG) would meet, monthly, to review applications and a member would be assigned to draft a response.
4. The draft response would be circulated to all members of the PWG.
5. Once agreed, this would be sent to the Clerk and then circulated to all members of the PC.
6. All responses to be agreed at next full Council meeting.
7. Clerk to submit response to UDC.

I realise that responses have already been sent to some of the applications on this month's agenda but it was also agreed that all applications should be on the agenda and then recorded in the minutes.

UDC Tree Planting Initiative - Details have been circulated. If the PC would like to participate, initially, we need to express an interest in the scheme. Plans would then have to be submitted showing location and details of the proposed planting. **An interest has been expressed.**

Trees on Shortgrove Estate - As reported at the last meeting the TPO's were removed on the trees at Shortgrove some time ago. I have now received a reply from the ECC Arboriculturist who confirmed that in 2010 ECC revoked all their TPO's in line with government advice. As they were one of only three County Councils still administering TPO's, which was an anomaly and led to a two-tier system with ECC and the District Councils both administering TPO's, which was very confusing for the general public and authorities alike. As part of that review ECC offered the District Councils grant aid to fund re-inspection of the trees or areas concerned, so that they could make new up-to-date and enforceable TPO's if necessary. It appears that Uttlesford District Council did not take advantage of that offer. **The Clerk will ask ECC if the offer is still available. If not, she will contact Ben Smeeden at UDC. RG advised that almost all the ECC TPO's were handed to UDC as it was far more sensible to have one body managing these.**

Arrangements for dropping off and collecting pupils away from the Academy (Park and Stride scheme) - I contacted the Village Hall Committee and whilst they said they would be happy to assist there were some practical issues. Judy contacted Network Rail and NCP to enquire whether the car park at the Station could be used and they have agreed which is very helpful. In the meantime residents of Bury Water Lane have been informed that there will be a temporary road closure from 15.20 – 15.35 and 15.45 – 16.00 from 4th September to 17th October in order for the children to access the buses safely.

Summer Competition - The competition closes on 30th September. Samantha has sent a press release to the Saffron Walden Reporter.

Remembrance Service, 8th November 2020 - Rev. Neil McLeod has contacted me regarding the possibility of holding a Remembrance Service on the Common on Sunday, 8th November, weather permitting.

This would allow more people to attend. In view of the current restrictions there would be no singing but the act of remembrance could be conducted at 11.00am, with a short said service afterwards. Rev. McLeod could then lead those wishing to lay wreaths on the memorial back to the Church in order to do that.

He has pointed out that the situation may change before November but asked if the PC would give permission to use the Common if necessary. Details would be confirmed nearer the date.

Hercules Bridge - The site surveys were carried out during week commencing Monday 3rd August and the road was opened a few days earlier than expected. I received several complaints from residents of Debden Road concerning their banks being damaged and one lorry hit a front porch. The problems were due to drivers of large lorries ignoring the signs on the Debden/Widdington Road and then being unable to turn round in Chalk Farm Lane.

Footbridge at bottom of School Lane - When I last spoke to Essex Highways they said a validation request would be put through to the Local Highways Panel for a new bridge. The next LHP meeting is later this month.

Salt Bag scheme - I understand the salt should be delivered to the Nisa Stores in the next few days I have informed Nisa and we will collect from the shop when the black bins need to be replenished.

Permission to place a memorial bench on the Common - Following the last meeting I have been in touch with the daughter of Bert Rand regarding the memorial seat on the Common. Details of the seat were circulated and HB met her to agree the location. We are now awaiting a quotation for the concrete base which the PC have agreed to pay for.

Our Caretaker has cleaned and treated with wood preserver the seat which was placed in Gaces Meadow in memory of Ted Denyer.

Giant Hogweed - I met with the owner of the land off White Horse Lane. He was not aware there was giant hogweed on his land and said he would deal with it. I have ordered more strong weed killer for Rob which he uses for the hogweed on the Common.

New sign "No Parking, Passing Bay only" for the road to the Recreation Ground - This has now arrived and HB will fit.

VAS sign, London Road - I understand that a part has been removed and taken away for repair

Dog poo Spray - Five cans of the spray have been handed to Councillors and residents.

Unauthorised encampment - Following complaints from residents about the travellers who were parked on an area off the Widdington Road, I reported them to the ECC Traveller unit as the area opposite was being used as a toilet. They then moved to North Hall Road, Ugley, and are currently at Debden Green. UDC Street cleaning team will now investigate. Further complaints were received about the amount of rubbish that was left.

Reports - The kerb at the top of Wicken Road has been chased again. Glass covers on three street lights have been broken, two PC lights and one ECC. They have been reported.

I have received complaints about parking on Wicken Road and the High Street. Letters have been sent to a number of residents about overhanging trees, hedges etc. The tree from Chestnut Court which was overhanging the pavement on the High Street has now been dealt with.

Whiteditch Lane - I asked our Community Special Constable to assist residents regarding "Raves" that I understand are being held in Whiteditch Lane.

Newport News - Please note the deadline for the next edition is 1st October 2020.

EALC AGM - This will be held by Zoom on 24th September.

Casual Vacancy - An election was not requested following the advertising of the vacancy caused by the resignation of Chris Barnes.

Future PC Meetings - EALC and NALC are still strongly advising local councils to continue to meet remotely. Church House is re-opening but only for very small group meetings.

20/345 To receive the Responsible Financial Officer's Report and approve accounts for payment, schedule circulated prior to the meetings

Duly received.

The payment schedule totalling £5,316.59 for 11 items was approved.

Proposed: JE Seconded: SAy All agreed

The RFO reported that the cheque for Ridgeons will be held until receipt of the invoice.

20/346 To receive reports/updates on Infrastructure/Maintenance

346.1 To receive an update on drainage work on the River Cam adjacent to the Common and on Wicken Water at the bottom of School Lane.

It was agreed that the permits should be applied for from the Environment Agency.

When these are received, it was proposed that the work should be carried out.

Proposed: SAy Seconded; JE All agreed

346.2 To approve the removal of the telephone box in Station Road

It was proposed that the telephone box should be removed from Station Road, The Clerk will make the necessary arrangements.

Proposed; Seconded: All agreed

346.3 To approve a quotation for installing new bollards at the bottom of School Lane

It was proposed that the quotation of £420.00 plus VAT should be approved.

Proposed: SAy

Seconded: SN

All agreed

20/347 To receive reports/updates on Planning

347.1 To discuss the government White Paper – Planning for the Future

NH will supply some background material and reasons it should be rejected. It was agreed that all members should read through the White Paper and then advise JE of the key points on which to object. JE will then draft a response and circulate.

RG advised that he has read it and feels there are some unintended consequences.

347.2 To receive an update on Frambury Fields and report on the meeting with Trivselhus and the UDC Planning Committee on 14th August 2020

HB and SAm attended the meeting. Trivselhus have now sent details of the fencing for the recreation ground and have arranged a meeting with Mike Hannant, Chairman of the Sports Committee, on Thursday, 10th September. They would also like to discuss the play equipment on the Common. As HB is unable to attend, JE will contact Trivselhus and endeavour to reorganise the meeting for the following week.

HB reiterated that the PC has to stand firm regarding the pipe crossing the Common. This is completely separate from the playground. SAm said she felt Trivselhus appear to be connecting them.

347.3 To discuss engaging Geoff Gardner if an Appeal is lodged following the refusal of planning permission at the Coach & Horses

It was proposed that JE should contact Geoff Gardner and ask him to submit a quotation for assisting with the response if an Appeal is lodged.

Proposed: /say

Seconded: HB

All agreed

347.4. To receive a report from the Planning Working Group

UTT/20/1078/FUL The Bungalow, Shortgrove (Comments by 28th August)

Demolition of existing dwelling and erection or replacement dwelling with single storey addition

Comments: Available on UDC website

UTT/19/2900/DFO Bricketts, London Road (Comments by 14th August)

Details following outline application UTT/16/1290/OP, details of appearance, landscaping layout and scale for 11 dwellings

UTT/20/1927/HHF The Pump House, Shorgrove (Comments by 2nd September)

Garden stores and home office

UTT/20/1755/FUL Land to the north of Whiteditch Lane (Comments by 3rd September)

Erection of 2 detached dwellings and garages

UTT/20/1941/FUL Coach & Horses Inn, Cambridge road (Comments by 4th September)

Variation of condition 2 attached to UTT/17/1801/LB to allow for monitoring of the timber frame during development works

UTT/20/2093/CLE The Basement, The Brown House (Comments by 22nd September)

Certificate of lawfulness for existing use of basement as retail

The Planning working Groups will meet on 10th September and agree responses to applications not yet submitted.

The Clerk raised the forthcoming Stansted Airport Appeal. NH suggested basing the objection on the Appellant's Statement of Case which is available on the UDC website.

With regard to UTT/20/2022/DOC, JFAN, the Clerk advised that the Case Officer is refusing to discharge because of condition 6 – Surface Water Drainage Scheme.

The PWG will also review the “Compass” database sent from SW Town Council at their next meeting and decide whether they would like to take up the offer of making a part payment to the subscription.

20/348 To receive reports/updates on Green Spaces and Sports

348.1 To receive an update on the new Public Right of Way from Whiteditch Lane to Bury Water Lane

JE reported that she has chased Nigel Brown at UDC but he has still not been back in touch regarding the funding for the fence. NH will take up with Gordon Glenday or, alternatively, John Lodge, Council Leader.

348.2 To discuss the UDC Tree Planting Initiative

The Clerk advised that she has contacted Ben Smeeden at UDC and expressed an interest in the initiative.

20/349 To receive reports/update on Liaison matters

349.1 To receive an update on arrangements for dropping off and collecting children away from the Academy following the meeting with Joyce Frankland Academy and Essex County Council in July 2020.

JE reported that two, fifteen minute closures have been put in place. Originally the contractors, Hill Residential, should have been on site at the start of term and they would have provided the streetwise accredited personnel. As they will not be on site until the 21st September, the Head, Duncan Roberts, has put alternative measures in place although we do not have details. JE will contact the Head for an update.

JE recorded a vote of thanks to John Smith who supplied contact details for National car parks which was extremely helpful in setting up the dropping off of children at the railway station.

349.2 To receive a report on the Summer Competition

SN reported that the closing date has been extended until the end of September. A press release was sent to the Saffron Walden Reporter but they failed to include so it has been re-sent for this week's edition. SN expressed thanks to everyone who had helped with this initiative.

349.3 To approve a request to hold the Remembrance Service on the Common on Sunday 8th November, weather permitting

It was proposed that the request to hold the Remembrance Service on the Common on Sunday 8th November 2020 should be approved.

Proposed: SAm

Proposed: SAy

All agreed

20/350 Items for next agenda

1. Update on Frambury Fields including
 - (a) Update on the adoption of Bridleway 16
 - (b) Update on the drainage options
 - (c) Update on the playground on the Common
2. To approve quotation for installing the height barrier at the Recreation Ground
3. To discuss a Health and Wellbeing Plan
4. To receive an update on Footpath 4 (from Whiteditch Lane to Bury Water Lane)
5. To discuss the use of the Fire pit at the Recreation ground
6. To receive an update on the CCTV at the Diana Sell Playground
7. To approve a quotation for new equipment at the Diana Sell Playground.

20/351 To discuss any Urgent matters of interest to the Parish

The Clerk raised the matter of the debris in the river from the ford at the bottom of School Lane to the motorway. JE will walk the path as soon as possible.

20/352 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held by Zoom on Monday, 5th October, 2020.

The meeting closed at 9.17 pm.

Signed.....(Chairman)

Dated: 05.10.20