

Minutes of the Shotley Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 15th December 2016 at 7:15pm at the Shotley Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs B Powell (Chairman), B Higgs (Vice-chairman), B Nichols, J Catling, R Green, N Green, M Williams, District Cllr D Davis, County Cllr D Woods, Mrs D Bedwell (Parish Clerk) and eight members of the public.

- 1. To note the election of Mr R Wrinch as Parish Councillor and complete the relevant Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Declaration of Interests forms:** The election of Mr R Wrinch was duly noted by members. The Clerk would be forwarding the relevant forms to Cllr R Wrinch for completion.
- 2. Apologies for absence:** Apologies had been received (and were approved) from Cllr P Merrin. Apologies had also been received from District Cllr P Patrick and D Davis.
- 3. Declarations of interest with regard to items on the agenda and additions to register:** There were no declarations of interest.
- 4. Reports**
 - (i) District Councillor's report: District Cllr D Davis' report was read by Cllr B Powell. District Cllr P Patrick's report had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting.
 - (ii) County Councillor's report: County Cllr D Wood gave members a verbal report and gave his apologies for the next meeting.
 - (iii) Website: There was no report available.
- 5. Suspension of standing orders:** *Meeting open for 5 minutes to allow members of the public to speak*
- Meeting open: Mr Steve Humphries reported on the recent exchange of comments on social media about the damage to the rubber matting under the swings at both play areas. He reported that members of the public had approached him to complain about the amount of public funds continuously being spent at the Heritage Park, an area which seemed to get most of the Parish Council funds in detriment of other areas, such as provision for the children of Shotley. Mr Humphries would, therefore, like to recommend that the Village of the Year funds were spent on the play areas. It also appeared that the Stour Footpath Group was, yet again, carrying out repairs to the wall near the Bristol Hill Picnic area where other more important repairs, such as the unsafe bench and steps on the Heritage Park had not been addressed.

Mr G Richens, speaking at a later stage from the public gallery, insisted that although the bench was moving ever so slightly, it had been checked on a number of occasions and was not thought to be an issue. Both the bench and the steps had very recently been checked by Mr G Pugh who had confirmed their status was acceptable.

Cllr B Powell said that he hoped the Footpath Group may be able to help with those two issues at some point.

Mr S Humphries added that there were always people in those areas and that any such health and

safety risks should be addressed.

Questions were also put forward with regards to the extent of the recent Highways improvements in Wolverstone and how disappointing it was that the repairs had not extended to the local nursing home. County Cllr D Woods stated that the decision as to the extent of the road works had been out of Wolverstone's Parish Council's control.

Mrs P Humphries asked a number of questions about recent Parish council expenditure on Freedom of Information requests, which the Clerk would provide a breakdown for in due course.

6. To approve Minutes of the meeting held 28th October (extraordinary) and 17th November 2016: It was resolved to approve the minutes as true records of the meetings held.

7. Administration

- (i) To receive Clerk's update: The Clerk gave members a detailed update on recent matters and matters pending from the previous meeting, including that she was helping the Police with their enquiries regarding a confidential matter, which would probably incur additional hours to be worked.
- (ii) To consider and approve the Parish Council's Vexatious Complainant's Policy: Deferred.
- (iii) To consider and approve statement re UK Power Networks and Freedom Group: A statement was yet to be released by the Freedom Group but it was hoped that a public presentation could be organised for the new year, hopefully in January.
- (iv) To consider and approve the Terms of Reference to be used and abided by any volunteer groups working on Parish Council owned land: The Terms of Reference had been produced in conjunction with legal advice received from the Babergh District Council. The Parish Council's responsibilities had been re-iterated during these discussions, as well as implications on insurance liability and other important aspects. The Terms would be used by and apply to any group, statutory body, contractor or volunteer working on Parish Council owned or maintained land or assets.

Although the Terms of Reference may appear to be quite detailed and onerous, members agreed that it was necessary to have a robust system in place to ensure that issues such as those experienced in the previous years would not be repeated. It was also agreed that should such a robust system have been in place before, such incidents probably would not have taken place. It was therefore, unanimously agreed to approve the Terms of Reference with immediate effect.

- (v) To consider having a dedicated SPC Facebook page in light of recent social media communications: At the start of the meeting, County Cllr D Woods had suggested that if the Parish Council was to adopt social media as a means of communication, then this should be limited to Twitter, as was the case with other local authorities.

Members expressed concern that Facebook, in particular Shaun's Shorts, may not be a feasible platform for Parish Council communications, particularly when there were already an established number of lines of formal communication with the Parish Council. It was also clear that the Parish Council was exposed to vexatious and possibly inaccurate "comments"

on such social media sites.

Cllr B Powell re-iterated that only recently a member of the Stour Footpath Group had taken to social media, namely Shaun's Shorts, to criticise the Parish Council to the point where he had received communications from people living away from Shotley about the very lengthy play areas repairs debate.

Mr G Richens, speaking from the public gallery, took exception to this remark.

There was a concern that the parish council website was currently in need of a total facelift and some items were probably some six years out of date. The Clerk had already approached the website editor on a number of occasions in order to organise a meeting so that the website could be brought up to date and cleared of material that should be archived. This would hopefully take place in the new year.

Cllr B Powell suggested that he would meet with the website editor but the Clerk advised that this would not be appropriate. There was already a website group that dealt with such matters which included the Clerk and Cllr B Nichols and any contractual issues should be dealt with by the Council as a whole.

It was resolved not to create a social media platform for parish council communications and to continue using the official means of communication already available. An alternative method of communication in printed form had also been approved by Council previously which would reach every household in Shotley, which was very important for those who did not have access to the internet.

8. Finance

- (i) To consider and approve accounts for payment and note bank balances following bank reconciliations: It was resolved to approve the accounts for payment, as follows:

Accounts for Payment:

1. SVHMC venue hire (November- replacement cheque)	£155.00
2. Realise Futures (pointer signs approved last month)	£112.80
3. E Bugg (November-replacement cheque)	£184.00
4. B Powell (gabions)-approved last month)	£201.00
5. Clerk salary	£1,325.25
6. HMRC (Tax, NI and Employer NI)	£664.27
7. E Bugg (Shotley Warden)	£168.00
8. Website	£120.00
9. Miss S Ratcliffe	£330.00
10. S A Meacock (grass cutting)	£220.00
11. Royal British Legion (wreath)	£50.00
12. Mr G Richens (SOS-plastic pointer sign 24.10.16)	£46.80
13. Rialtas Ltd 9accounts software)	£135.60
14. PHS Group (sanitary container emptying wc's)	£150.97
15. Clerk's expenses (subs, postage, mileage, sundries)	£236.24

Standing Orders suspended. Cllr B Powell invited Mr G Richens to speak about item of

expenditure no 16 (not approved), in addition to the previous month's invoice for £423 (also not approved), which now totalled £1222.00. Mr G Richens explained that he had agreed early in 2016 to carry out the final two amendments to the MMO License, for which the Parish Council had given him authorisation and for which expenditure of £282 had been approved and paid in advance to the MMO. This was conditional before any further work took place.

After an initial e-mail exchange, the MMO officer had confirmed with Mr G Richens that the amendments had been completed. There had been a further occasional exchange of e-mails and telephone calls between Mr G Richens and the MMO since, when he had asked for technical support but at no stage was any further request for payment made.

Mr G Richens had been able to view a payments section on their website but it appeared that the actual final payment request figure did not match the quote he had received.

Mr G Richens confirmed that he was aware that he was not in a position to authorise any further costs.

Cllr B Powell stated that he would have to "put the ball" in Mr G Richens court so that the matter could be resolved.

Mr G Richens confirmed that Cllr B Powell had handed him over the invoices at the last Shotley Open Spaces meeting, that he had made initial enquiries but was not prepared to continue doing so and it would be down to the Parish Council to follow it up.

Standing Orders resumed. The Clerk informed members that she had spoken with an MMO representative and he had explained that invoices were produce quarterly and referred to transactions/works carried out during that period of time, hence why there was a listing of dates and times for telephone calls and e-mail correspondence between Mr G Richens and the MMO. Furthermore, the last transaction had only taken place a few days earlier, therefore the costs did not refer to old or past transactions. Members were adamant that these invoices should not be paid as the Parish Council had not approved such expenditure.

- (ii) To note further account for payment for £799.00 received from the Marine Management Organisation, which is being disputed: Deferred. Account not approved by Council.
- (iii) Request from the Stour Footpath Group, recently launched as Shotley Open Spaces, to increase a monthly maintenance non-accruable budget from £50 to £80 - Deferred to January pending approval of SPC Terms of Reference (Item 6 (iv) and subsequent receipt and approval of costed scheme of works proposals
- (iv) To consider request to fell/cut back trees in the Heritage Park (quote received): Cllr R Green declared a non-pecuniary interest on the matter pertaining to the Ever Green Oak tree at the bottom of the Heritage Park near the picnic area. Quotes had been received for all the works and these were approved by members. The Shotley Open Spaces Group had cut back one of the dead trees included in the quote so the Clerk would be asking the contractor to revise that quote. Cllr B Powell handed over a bottle of chainsaw oil to Mr G Richens as a gesture of appreciation, which was accepted by Mr G Richens. Cllr R Green volunteered to make a contribution towards the cost of cutting back the Ever Green Oak as it was close to his property.

(v) To consider budget and precept for 2017/2018: Deferred.

9. Planning matters

(i) Applications received for recommendation to Babergh District Council: None received.

(ii) To note Approvals/Refusals: None received.

(iii) Planning Correspondence: None received.

10. To consider proposal to move the village sign, including permission from SCC Highways: Deferred, as response from SCC Highways was pending.

11. To consider request from the S.O.S for the Parish Council to apply for a PSMA license in order to have access to definitive footpath maps, one to be sited by the village hall subject to approval from the SVHMC, and one at "The Galley" subject to approval from the Shotley Parish Council- no cost implication for the license: It was resolved to apply for this license. Clerk to action.

12. To consider purchasing the frames for the footpath maps with an inscription indicating funding source: It was agreed by members that a maximum of £275 could be spent in the purchase of 2 boards at £100 each, and 2 posts at £60 each. Installation to be carried out by the Shotley Open Spaces (*subject to SPC TOR's and SPC approved SOS scheme of works*). It was also suggested that one of the boards should be sited at the Village Hall near the existing noticeboard.

13. To note correspondence and agree any response (confidential correspondence to be discussed under item 20): Correspondence circulated to members.

14. To receive update on request to cut back overgrowth from Styngam Cottages to Chapel Fields: Following a brief discussion, Cllr R Wrinch kindly volunteered to cut back this area of overgrowth, subject to permission being received from SCC Highways.

15. Play areas:

(i) To consider quote received for the provision of a "No dogs" sign: This item was deferred but members agreed that a white sign with black lettering would be appropriate. Clerk to circulate quotes.

(ii) Substitution of safety matting in the Lloyd Road and Kingsland play areas- to receive update and agree actions: A number of options were discussed. However, as time was of the essence members agreed that a ceiling figure of £3,000 was approved for repairs to the matting on both play areas providing works were carried out as soon as possible. Clerk to action. Mr N Bugg was asked if the conveniences at the village hall could be used should the Community Payback team carry out the work and he confirmed that they could.

16. Shotley Gate Community Shop project- to receive suggestions from members and agree any further Actions: A brief report was received from Cllr B Powell on the current position. The Bristol Arms was no longer opening at lunch time; the adjacent shop had already closed and there was still a need for the provision of a community shop, including a post office facility. Cllr B Powell was still in talks with the post office regarding a replacement post box on Bristol Hill. Cllr B Powell suggested re-forming

the original community shop committee in order to look at possibilities.

Members expressed their concern that although two public meetings had previously been very well attended and initially the support had been there, once a need for volunteers was raised, the level of interest dropped.

Clerk to circulate e-mail to former members in order to gauge whether re-forming the committee was a realistic possibility.

17. **Reports from Councillors on matters not itemised on agenda/to be included in next Agenda** (no decisions with a financial implication are permitted to be made at this point and should be added to a future agenda for consideration): Cllr M William reported that she had spoken with Miss S Ratcliffe who had informed her that the hand drier at the Bristol Hill conveniences was still not working.
18. **Chair's urgent business:** any items not on this agenda but of such urgency as to merit, in the Chair's opinion, immediate action: No matters to report.
19. **Date of next meeting:** 19 January 2017
20. **Suspension of standing orders:** *Meeting open for 5 minutes to allow members of the public to speak* - **Meeting open:** Mr G Richens stated that he was very pleased with some of the outcomes from the meeting.

Temporary exclusion of press and public: *That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission at meetings) Act 1960 the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed*

21. **Administrative and legal matters:** To receive updates and agree any further actions: A brief discussion took place but it was agreed that a longer meeting would be needed in January in order to consider all the current legal matters.

With no further matters to be transacted, the meeting ended at 9.30pm, followed by a festive gathering of some of the members and parishioners.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____