

Minutes of the Shotley Parish Council Virtual Meeting held on Thursday 27th August 2020 (7.30pm)

Present: Cllrs R Wrinch (Chairman), B Powell (Vice-Chairman), C Mills, R Green, J Briscoe, D Davis, M Williams and Mrs D Bedwell (Parish Clerk).

County and District Councils: County Cllr D Woods and District Cllr D Davis.

Public gallery: Three members of the public

Public participation at meetings: *Meeting was “opened” in order to allow members of the public to speak:*

A member of the public (MOP) wished to make representation regarding the matter of the swimming pool at the Ganges site.

The MOP started by thanking the Clerk for all the information recently provided on the matter and expressing how shocked they had been to find out that, contrary to public perception, (that the swimming pool was due to be refurbished) , it was instead due to be demolished. This had been reinforced by a poll conducted on a local social media page, with 90% of responders expecting the building and asset to be redeveloped, not demolished.

The MOP stated that the building and the Swimming Pool could become a living, vibrant memorial if this was to become a community project; that technological energy source developments such as solar panels and heat pumps could reduce the high heating costs; that Covid-19 had resulted in a change of perceptions and that there was a drive to make the population healthier, which could benefit such a project.

Stradbroke Leisure facilities had recently benefitted from funding in the region of £200,000 from their local Council- Could a case not be made for the swimming pool? The earmarked £40,000 feasibility study budget should be used towards an assessment. If the parish was to have ambition and a vision, they could work towards delivering the facility.

The Clerk provided a summary of what had occurred in 2017 and what the current position was with regards to the various stages of the process. Copies of all the relevant documents had not only been circulated to members but also uploaded onto the Parish Council website and the local social media page. The £40k committed sum had not been passed on to the Parish Council as yet and remained with the developer, as part of a wider S106 agreement.

Some debate between MOP's and Council members ensued, including:

Cllr comment: A number of discussions had been held with the developers in the period leading up to the decision made in 2017, which was to support the developer's withdrawal from the refurbishment of the swimming pool. The general feeling at that time, based on advice received and knowledge of financial problems which other pools at local and national level were facing, was that it would not be financially viable, not only in terms of capital but also revenue.

Cllr comment: A feasibility study had been conducted in the 1980's and even then it was deemed no longer feasible, as it had fallen into disrepair and was very expensive to upkeep. The deterioration of the site would have only got worse with the passing time.

MOP: A proper survey of the building and asset may be expensive but would be worth it, as the value of the asset in the long run would be higher than the refurbishment costs. A study would also inform on what type of subsidies may be available and how other schemes worked.

CLLr comment: The case referred to earlier in discussions, of Stradbroke, came under the auspices of Mid Suffolk District Council, which was a separate sovereign council. This would come under Babergh District Council, who did not have the funds to support such a project. The Parish Council and the developer made an agreement at the time, therefore the decision had been taken out of the Babergh DC planning officer's hands. As the Clerk had pointed out earlier in her summary, the decision laid in the hands of the developer at this stage.

CLLr comment: Members of the public were interested in seeing whether the swimming pool could be saved. The Parish Council needed to decide whether it should approach the developers and ask if the demolition process could be delayed.

CLLr comment: The mood of the village was that parishioners did not seem to be aware of the agreement made between the Parish Council and the developer, and there was a belief that the swimming pool had been saved as part of the Ganges development planning process. The fact that it was due to be demolished had come as a surprise for many and this had led to ill feelings towards the Parish Council. This was not a good position to be in and needed to be ratified.

CLLr comment: The information had been shared with the public at the time but sometimes members of the public were not interested in the information the Parish Council shared.

CLLr comment: This would be a huge task and long-term prospects would need to be considered. For example, if even only one full-time member of staff was employed, that would be a substantial amount to be budgeted. Ipswich Borough Council was struggling to support Crown Pools. The sustainability of such a project was a concern, not to mention the capital costs of refurbishing it, which would be over £1M. Even though a community group could be set up initially, it would be a great undertaking.

CLLr comment: I was a member of a group which had been set up with this project in mind and even back in 2011 the group decided that this would not be feasible. There was (and still is) a large amount of asbestos on the site and just the cost of restoring it would negate any business case.

CLLr comment: From memory, a figure of some £3M was discussed over the years. When one took into account that Crown Pools had lost half a million pounds in the previous year alone, if the parish was to spend £2M, £3M, that cost would never be recovered.

CLLr comment: It might be worth carrying out a study just so it can clearly demonstrate to our parishioners that it is not financially viable or feasible.

CLLr comment: The Home Office had been paying astronomical amounts of money just to heat the pool when it was open many years ago.

CLLr comment: It seemed there was a considerable number of residents who may not fully appreciate the position taken back then by this Council, who may not have been aware of the dialogue with the developers, or the minutes of the meeting when the matter was discussed at length. What this Council need to decide is whether members feel they wish to be part of a group that approaches the

developers with a request to put a hold on the demolition process, whether the Parish council should be part of the drive or whether we just support the group but expect it to take the initiative themselves.

MOP 2: Although this member of the public understood all the points raised, whichever way the discussion went, communication would be extremely important. In their view, this was a pivotal moment, where the Council would need to stand back and communicate their message in a different way in order to reach a wider audience.

It was suggested that in addition to the usual mediums, the matter would be added to the "In Touch" magazine, which was delivered to every house in Shotley.

CLlr comment: A full assessment would most probably cost twice the £40,000 amount agreed with the Parish Council. The amount of money spent on the Broomhill site so far had ran into six figures. The group would need to employ someone before the project even started, to put together a bid for National Lottery funding, as it was a very complex process. It would also cost a considerable amount of money to run.

Members discussed that although it would be possible to ask the developers whether they could hold the demolition process, they were most probably too far down the legal route for such considerations at this stage. Also, if the cost of refurbishing the swimming pool was not feasible, could the building be considered for other initiatives, such as a sports hall or a gym?

Members were asked if a "block" could be put on the S106 legal process and it was mentioned that there may be an appeal process but this would need to be further investigated and the MOP/group would need to seek independent legal advice in order to decide whether this was a route worth pursuing.

There appeared to be enough strength of feeling to justify some action by the Parish Council at this stage. It was, therefore, agreed that the Clerk would contact the developers with a request to consider putting the demolition process on hold for a period of time, enough to give the community time to look into whether they would be able to prepare a business plan, carry out feasibility studies and raise sufficient funds to refurbish the swimming pool as the heritage/community asset that many felt it was.

SPC/20/72: To receive and consider any apologies for absence: Apologies had been received from Cllrs R Bareham and T Ingram.

SPC/20/73: To receive declarations of interest with regards to items on the agenda: No declarations of interest were received.

SPC/20/74: To note County and District Councillors' reports: Both Councillors provided the meeting with brief verbal reports.

SPC/20/75: To hold a debate on HMS Ganges- swimming pool demolition- Main planning application B/12/00500- Discharge of Condition 25, (DC/19/04581 and DC/19/01735)- and agree any action to be taken: This matter had been discussed at length during the public participation section of the meeting, with a final resolution being made to contact the developer with the views expressed by members of the public and a request to consider putting the demolition on hold until further considerations were made. Clerk to action.

SPC/20/76: To receive report from the Community Orchard Group and consider any requests therein:

A written report had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting which included proposals for an Anglia Water supply point and additional funding towards the purchase of more stock.

The Parish Council agreed to look into the possibility of providing a water supply near the Orchard but with an added proviso that any group/organisation needing to use it would contribute towards their respective usage. The Clerk was asked to make enquiries about the cost implications of this proposal with Anglia Water in order for the proposal to be considered further.

With regards to additional funding for the purchase of more trees and seeds, the Parish Council agreed to wait until all the costings had been prepared and the Group had demonstrated how they had raised other funding towards it, before members were in a position to fully consider it.

As the Parish Council had provided the land for the project and had match-funded all the initial costs, members agreed there was a need to manage expectations with regards to continued revenue expenditure support in order to allow the Group to explore other available income sources.

SPC/20/77: Planning matters (including neighbouring parishes):

- a) **Decision- DC/20/02895 1 And 3 Queensland-** Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/18/05002- Condition 5 (Highways Surface Water Discharge Prevention), Condition 6 (Refuse Bins) and Condition 8 (Cycle Storage and Electric Vehicle Charging Points): **All conditions satisfied-** Noted.
- b) **Decision- DC/20/02894 16 Queensland,** Discharge of Conditions Application for DC/18/05003- Condition 3 (Levels) and Condition 6 (Bin Storage): **All conditions satisfied-** Noted.
- c) **Consultation- Chelmondiston Neighbourhood Plan Reg 14** (circulated 20.07.20 and 17.08.20): No comments were made at this point.
- d) **Application- DC/20/03247 Woolverstone** - Erection of phased development of 22no. dwellings, creation of cycle path links to Holbrook and Chelmondiston, improvements to Berners Hall car park, provision of public open space and landscape enhancements. | Sites and Cycle Paths Woolverstone To Holbrook, Woolverstone To Chelmondiston Main Road Woolverstone Suffolk: It appeared the landowner was willing to create just over two miles of off-road cycle route as part of this development, which would be for the benefit of the community and in line with the aspirations of the Peninsula Cycling Campaign.

Members raised the possibility of linking it to Shotley and Cllr R Winch, as the relevant landowner within the parish, demonstrated a willingness to facilitate further extensions. Other Councillors also suggested that the £40k Ganges swimming pool amount may be better spent on such an initiative but were informed that the Ganges development itself already had in place a deferred payment towards cycle route provision/improvement.

County Cllr D Woods added that the proposed development abutted the AONB and that there may be some issues with the application as it appeared to go against a number of Babergh's planning policies regarding development in the countryside.

Further comments by members included that the development provided two units of social housing, which was also considered beneficial to the area. As the Parish Council was not a formal consultee in the process, no formal representation was agreed with regards to this planning application.

SPC/20/78: To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 16 July 2020: It was resolved to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting held.

SPC/20/79: Finance and Administration

- a) To consider and approve the accounts for payment and note receipts/bank balances: It was resolved to approve the accounts for payments as per schedule circulated ahead of the meeting.
- b) Receipt of £6,000 donation: To note that all legalities have been verified by the Auditor and BDC; To consider Clerk's recommendations to place it in earmarked reserve to support residents/businesses/organisations which may face financial difficulty as a result of the Covid-19 crisis: The lawfulness of acceptance of this donation had been established and was noted.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that there should be a level of flexibility with regards to the funds and that although they could be ring-fenced for the play areas capital project, some may be diverted towards supporting needs resultant from the Covid-19 crisis should that be necessary in the future.

- c) To ratify approval of a funding application from Shotley Open Spaces for £200 towards the cost of a mobile defibrillator: The application had been supported electronically by members and actioned under Clerk's delegated powers.
- d) To agree the reinstatement of normal Parish Council business in light of regular virtual meetings being held, with scheme of delegation remaining in cases of health and safety / emergency / regular contractual obligations: It was agreed that, as regular virtual meetings were taking place, normal council business would resume but that the Clerk would also be able to act in emergency situations in-between meetings, should that be necessary, in consultation with members and in line with Standing Orders and Financial regulations.
- e) To agree listing of nominated Councillors for additional point of contact (in line with Working Group/Committee representatives): The Clerk's list of proposed nominations had been circulated ahead of the meeting and was agreed by all.
- f) To receive updates on ongoing matters (Clerk and Councillors): The Clerk's detailed list of updates had been circulated to members and was noted.

SPC/20/80: To adopt the General Power of Competence: A formal proposal had been circulated by the Clerk which recommended that the Parish Council resolved that it met the eligibility criteria to exercise the General Power of Competence as defined in the Parish Council (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 and therefore adopted the Power for the coming term of office of the Council.

The General Power of Competence enabled eligible local Councils to take an enhanced role and allowed them to do things they had previously been unable to do. It was designed to give local authorities greater freedom to carry out the functions that were required locally. It gave eligible

Councils, “the power to do anything that individuals generally may do” as long as they did not break other laws. It was intended to be a power of first, not last, resort, as opposed to that under S137.

The General Power of Competence would also allow the Council to react more effectively to challenges presented by the Covid-19 crisis and providing members were fully aware of the added corporate responsibility when it came to decision making, it could potentially be an extremely valuable “asset”.

The Council would continue to comply with relevant existing legislation - Employment Law, Health and Safety legislation, Equality legislation and duties related to data protection and freedom of information, as well as existing financial and procedural duties which remained in place for regulating governance.

Following a brief discussion, it was resolved to approve the recommendation to adopt the General Power of Competence.

SPC/20/81: Correspondence:

- a) “Planning for the future” consultation- circulated (10.08.20)- Noted.
- b) Code of conduct complaint received by the Monitoring Officer- To be noted only (confidential): Noted.

SPC/20/82: Reports from Councillors/requests for addition on future agendas for consideration:

Reports included the following matters:

- A number of streetlights in Kingsland did not appear to be working
- A broken manhole cover near the Primary School had been reported to Anglia Water on at least four different occasions but remained outstanding
- Post box near St Mary’s Church- Response from resident expected before the end of September
- Bus shelter litter a concern- additional visits to be requested from Warden
- Shotley Peninsula Shoreline Group provided a brief report via Cllr R Green- The Parish Clerk was thanked for all her help with the annual Corporation Tax workings and return
- Cllr D Davis was thanked for his help with a local matter

The Parish Council also wished to note the sincere condolences for the loss of a young life from the Peninsula as a result of a road traffic collision on the A137 between Brantham and Tattingstone in the previous evening.

SPC/20/83: Date of next meeting: September 17th, 7.30pm (Internal Audit, First and Second Quarter Accounts 2020/2021, Draft Budget and Precept workings): Noted.

SPC/20/84: To consider the 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:* It was resolved to exclude members of the public, who left the “virtual meeting at this point.

SPC/20/85: Opportunity for members to discuss matters pertaining to the adopted Suffolk Code of Conduct in light of recent correspondence received and circulated: A brief discussion took place and there were no further actions for the Clerk or councillors at this point.

With no further matters to be transacted, the meeting ended at 10.00pm

Signed: _____ Dated: _____