

Minutes of the Shotley Parish Council Virtual Meeting held on Thursday 10th December 2020 (7.30pm)

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

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

Public gallery: One member of the public.

Public participation at meetings: A member of the public gave a report on matters pertaining to the Community Orchard. Following a brief discussion on the various points and having answered all the relevant questions, the MOP exited the meeting.

SPC/20/124: To receive and consider any apologies for absence: Apologies had been received from Cllrs R Bareham and R Green and both were approved by Council.

SPC/20/125: To receive declarations of interest with regards to items on the agenda: Cllr T Ingram declared a non-pecuniary interest on item SPC/20/131 a).

SPC/20/126: To note County and District Councillors' reports: Cllr D Woods' report had been circulated ahead of the meeting and Cllr D Davis provided a verbal report.

SPC/20/127: Planning matters:

- a) **Application: DC/20/04309 - Shotley Marina Ltd, King Edward VII Drive-** Application under S73a for removal or variation of conditions relating to B/13/01384/FUL dated 07/03/2016. Town and Country Planning Act 1990. - To Vary Condition 2 (Approved Plans and Documents) - The proposal seeks to amend the layouts but retain the quantum of development (19 residential units) and reflects the overall scale of the previous approval and falls within the same site location, as per revised drawings received 2nd October 2020: Following due consideration, it was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.
- b) **Application: DC/20/05281 - 4 Broadwater Gardens-** Conversion of loft to additional living accommodation and insertion of roof lights: It was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.
- c) **Application: DC/20/05339 - Lindi, The Street-** Demolition of existing house and rebuilding with enlargements to rear and side. (Provision of on-site caravan for duration of development): It was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.
- d) **Application: DC/20/04613 - Former HMS Ganges Site-**Application for works to trees subject to Tree Preservation BT/401 and within Conservation Area - Trim overhanging branches to neighbours' properties. It was resolved to recommend the approval of this planning application.
- e) **Decision: DC/20/04771 Site of Former, 1 - 3 Queensland-** Discharge of Conditions for DC/18/05002 - Condition 11 (Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy: Noted.

- f) **Decision: DC/20/04345 Charity Farmhouse, Wades Lane-** Erection of single storey linked extension (following demolition of existing single storey extension). Erection of first floor rear extension (re-submission of DC/19/04951): Planning permission refused: Noted.
- g) **Decision: DC/20/04346 Charity Farmhouse, Wades Lane-** Erection of single story linked extension (following demolition of existing). Erection of first floor rear extension (re-submission of DC/19/04952): Listed building consent refused: Noted.
- h) **Decision: DC/20/04232 2 Diamond Cottages, The Street-**Erection of a single storey rear extension: Planning permission granted: Noted.

SPC/20/128: To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 19 November 2020: It was resolved to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting held.

SPC/20/129: 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 payment, as follows:

Salaries, Tax, NI and pension liabilities	£1,590.13
Clerk's expenses (Microsoft licence, E-mail domains, BT line, etc)	£140.22
Food Parcel Scheme	£300.88
Bristol Hill Public Conveniences cleaning contract	£341.00
Village Warden contract	£635.75
BDC litter bin emptying charges	£1,279.26
BDC play areas inspections	£121.63
Rialtas annual membership and year-end process	£580.80
PKF Littlejohn External Audit	£408.00
SALC Internal Audit	£336.00
N Power (Bristol Hill public conveniences energy supply)	£60.90
Grass-cutting contract	£362.80
Home Farms (Community Orchard)	£173.78

- b) To receive and approve the External Audit for the year ended 31 March 2020: Deferred as not yet completed by the auditor.
- c) To approve first and second quarter accounts for 2020/2021: The first quarter accounts were reviewed and approved by Council. The second quarter accounts were deferred due to technical issues.
- d) To receive any further updates on ongoing matters: A brief report was received from the Clerk, which included the worn-off painting of the parking bays at the bottom of Bristol Hill and the lack of progress by SCC with regards to the approval of the SID installation.

SPC/20/130: To consider application for funding from the Shotley Peninsula Cricket Club: The applicant had requested that this was deferred to January 2021.

SPC/20/131: Open spaces and amenities:

- a) SPS CIC- To receive report and consider proposals: A brief report was received from Cllr T Ingram.
- b) Shotley Community Orchard- To receive update: Following due consideration of the Group's latest report and the various items of correspondence exchanged on the lead up to the Council meeting, it was resolved not to reconsider the decision made at the previous meeting.

Cllr D Woods, who was present during discussions, agreed to inform the AONB grants panel of the Council's position with regards to the non-rescission of the decision previously made and agree a way forward with the Group. It was suggested that a request for further consideration may be put forward by the group in another six months.

It was agreed that it should be made clear to the group that as the land in which the Community Orchard was situated continued to remain under the responsibility of the Parish Council, any changes to it or any additional expenditure would always need to come before the Council for consideration. It was also suggested that a clear set of terms of reference may be helpful in the future, as these may assist with the preparation and early submission of any new proposals, with sufficient detail to facilitate an informed decision.

County Cllr D Woods left the meeting at 20.54hrs.

- c) To consider request to place a memorial bench near the bottom of the steps, below Quarter Deck, on the foreshore footpath: It was resolved to approve this request and the exact placement would be agreed following a meeting with the parishioner in question, and in line with recommendations made by members (further up from the path, where the ground was less likely to be affected by erosion).

SPC/20/132: Correspondence: Request for information from MOP pertaining to the Ganges swimming pool (2017): A member of the public had submitted a number of questions to the Parish Council and had requested that the responses were minuted accordingly. The following minute refers to this exchange:

"I would like to take up you offer of assistance as I have some questions which I would like to be put to the Parish Council at this month's Parish Council meeting.

Specifically, I would like to direct the questions to Councillor Barry Powell who was the Chairman of the Parish Council in 2017. Councillor Powell chaired the Parish Council meeting to which my questions relate; this was the meeting held on Thursday 15th June 2017.

My questions for Councillor Powell are as follows:

1. *Paragraph 8 (iii) states that in relation to the swimming pool: "This was now clearly no longer a financially viable option if the losses made by commercial swimming pools in neighbouring towns was anything to go by (Crown Pools being a typical example)".*

Question. What actual up to date reports did the parish council have available to allow it to assess the viability of repairing and running the swimming pool before making the public announcement that it was not a financially viable option?

Parish Council response:

The assertions made at the time regarding the financial viability of the Ganges swimming pool were based on:

- a) Feedback received from members of the Ganges Swimming Pool Group, which had been established a number of years previously, and were of the view that even if the developer was to shoulder the initial refurbishment (capital) cost, the management and, therefore, the financial responsibility for its future would have to be divested to a third party. At the time, neither that Group, nor the Parish Council, or the District or County Councils were either able or willing to take it on.
- b) The developer was able to share with the Parish and District Councils the projected refurbishment costs, as per report, which exceeded £1.2 million pounds. If the developer no longer wished to proceed with it, whoever took it on would take responsibility for that capital costs as well. As in the previous point, neither the local Group, or Parish, District or County Council had the means or the will to take it on.
- c) There was wide-spread reporting of considerable losses being made by swimming pools nationwide, and of particular interest Crown Pools.
- d) Still trying to recover from the Great Recession of 2008/2009, the growth of the UK economy had slowed in 2017 due to the sharp rise in inflation, which had subsequently squeezed households' spending power. This would reflect in spend on things which were not necessities, and which swimming would come under.
- e) This was also barely a year after the Brexit referendum, which again contributed to further destabilisation of the UK economy and made investors quite cautious when it came to initiatives which were already reportedly making huge losses (ie, swimming pools).

2. Paragraph 8 (iii) also stated that in the future that a new swimming pool could be a consideration .

Question. What reports or studies were used as a reference to determining that building new swimming pool was a financially viable option, a cheaper option, rather than repairing the current building?

Parish Council response:

The suggestion that a new pool may be a consideration in the future was based on the understanding that to build a new pool, particularly if this was to be smaller than the existing one, would be much cheaper. To refurbish the existing one would involve more of a total removal of the existing one due to the amount of asbestos on site and the bad state of repair of the actual facility.

The use of new technologies would be limited due to constraints posed by the building that it sits in.

Ongoing costs of a smaller pool would, unquestionably, be lower than the maintenance costs of the existing. Less water to heat, less surface to maintain, less cubic meterage of water to change regularly in line with health and safety guidelines, etc.

It was not a case of whether it was a more financially viable option, as the Profit & Loss account was very unlikely to ever show a net profit but more of a least loss making one. It would need to be heavily subsidised by a third party.

3. It is very clear from recent responses that the larger part of the community did not know that the swimming pool was to be demolished before the communications in August 2020.

Question. *There was always an expectation that the swimming pool would be refurbished at some point during the redevelopment of the HMS Ganges. When the Parish Council decided that the swimming pool was not financially viable why was there not wider public consultation with the community to see if they agreed? Who made that decision and why?*

Parish Council response:

One assumes that the numbers you are referring to are to do with the initial social media post. However, one has to take into account that residents who lived in the village then and have since left would not be included; residents who do not use social media would not be included and residents who generally display apathy to matters of the Council would continue to do so despite the Council's attempts at keeping the parish informed of such matters.

It needs to be made clear that it was not the Parish Council who decided that the swimming pool was no longer a financially viable undertaking. The Parish Council merely agreed with the developer's assertion that in the financial climate of the time and based on nationally available financial evidence, this was the case.

The refurbishment of the Ganges swimming pool was and continues to be a planning condition, which comes under the remit of the planning authority. Questions as to whether wider consultation on the removal of this condition should have taken place should be directed to Babergh District Council, who ultimately made the decision. Not the Parish Council.

I had hoped that these questions would have been answered at the last Parish Council meeting. When I attempted raise the questions and direct them towards Council Powell the current Chairman Councillor Richard Wrinch stated that Councillor Powell did not have to answer my questions. I do not believe that is correct so I have taken the opportunity to raise the questions formally.

Once again I thank you for you offer of assistance. On the record I will state again I applaud and support the efforts of the volunteers who make up the Parish Council and thank you for good work that is completed by you for the community.

However on the issue of the swimming pool it was the removal of any objection by the Parish Council in June 2017 that opened the door to allow the developer to apply to have the legally binding Section 106 changed giving them the authority to demolish the building. Unless you can provide me with evidence to the contrary it would appear that this has been done without any proper assessments being completed, and with the exception of the parish council meeting in Jun 2017, without wider consultation with the community. It this is the case it cannot be correct.

Parish council response:

As it has been explained before, this Parish Council reaches its decisions by way of a democratic process which involves all of its members. The Chairman does not have any authority or power

to influence such decisions and is not personally held accountable at the time or at a later date. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to direct questions at any of the Council's members. Our response to any questions will continue to be corporate and democratic.

The Parish Council would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind words about the work of our elected members, who very often have to strike a balance under difficult circumstances.

The Parish Council strives to do what is best for our community but at times we have to remain pragmatic.

We must bear in mind that ultimately, Haylink own the site and if they did not wish, for financial reasons or otherwise, to progress with this planning condition, they would not need the Parish Council's assent to do so. And even if the planning authority had challenged it, they could have resorted to the appeal process.

We hope that this answers your questions adequately."

SPC/20/133: Reports from Councillors/requests for addition on future agendas for consideration: Cllr B Powell advised members that two of the Christmas trees had been erected and decorated. St Mary's Church had not required one this year.

Cllr M Williams thanked Cllr B Powell for the dog signage he had recently placed in Kingsland. Cllr M Williams had reported the streetlights in and around the Street, Kingsland and Queensland which were yet to be repaired.

Cllr J Briscoe advised Cllrs on the Clerk's ability to carry over a certain amount of annual leave to the following two years when full entitlement was not taken (under the new Coronavirus provision).

The Clerk asked for members' approval (under Clerk's delegated powers) for the expenditure involved in the preparation of a small Christmas gift for the Council's contractors as a show of appreciation for their hard work during the pandemic. This was unanimously agreed by members.

SPC/20/134: Date of next meeting: January 14th 7.30PM (FWG); January 21st 7.30PM (PC): Noted.

SPC/20/135: 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 agreed to exclude members of the public but none remained at that point.*

SPC/20/136: Staff matters: Members considered the report circulated by the Clerk and the recommendations therein were approved in full.

With no further matters to be transacted, the meeting ended at 9.20pm.

Signed: _____ Date: _____