

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 21st September 2020
Virtual Meeting via Member Zoom Conferencing commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Present:			
Cllr R Weaver RW	Chair	Cllr M Woollard	
Cllr J Barber JB		Cllr M Nunn	
Cllr J Hughes JH			
Mrs B Bland BB	Clerk		

In attendance Cllr Diccico and 4 members of the public.

1. Welcome & Apologies

Chair welcomed Councillors and members of the public; and noted the non-attendance without apologies of Cllr Lynch-Smith. Apologies were received from Cllrs Allsopp, Howell and Kipling. The meeting was being live streamed and RW thanked all for logging in.

IT WAS RESOLVED Members recorded the non-attendance of Cllr Lynch-Smith. Apologies were accepted from Cllrs Kipling, Allsopp and Howell.

2. Public Participation

There were no guests and Chair invited public questions.

Members of the public requested updates on actions from July’s meeting.

- Cllr Hughes advised the parish council wrote a letter to Cllr Diccico. Cllr Diccico advised he had liaised with council officers in all areas of concerns identified. Cllr Hughes requested permission from Cllr Diccico to post his response onto social media sites for public access, which Cllr Diccico agreed to.

Action: JH to arrange for letter to be posted to social media sites 22nd September.

- Cllr Hughes advised that given the current situation and COVID lockdown earlier in the year, no data was forthcoming from the EA and SMBC monitoring stations due to accuracy of readings given lockdown and reduced traffic and quarry working. JH advised the parish council were continuing to pursue Cllr Howell and quarry operators to re-establish the Quarry Liaison Group. Clerk also stated that many operators had changed their site personnel and it was the case that new site managers were unaware of the importance and significance of the Liaison Group.

Action: Clerk to contact SMBC/EA for more information. JH/Clerk to follow up reinstatement of Quarry Liaison Group.

- Cllr Hughes advised the parish council response to Strawberry Bank planning application could be viewed on the planning portal.

Signed Chair **Dated**

A number of concerns had been raised at a meeting of the Agent and Applicant. Objections have been submitted on behalf of parish council.

Chair asked if there were any further questions; and there were none.

Clerk added that there was an increase in resident concerns regarding dog fouling. The matter had been referred to the Love Solihull Team for their support with signage. Additionally the clerk reported that the earlier complaints regarding Meriden Gate open space, in particular the SUDS (attenuation basin) had been referred to SMBC drainage and further escalated to Corporate Legal team and David Wilson Homes.

Action: Clerk to request update from Legal and Love Solihull Teams.

3. Declarations of Interest

3a To declare any personal interests in items on the agenda and their nature.
None.

3b To declare any prejudicial interests in items on the agenda and their nature
None.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting – 20th July 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2020 were agreed as an accurate record with no amendments raised in pages 1-9. All matters arising are covered in the agenda.

IT WAS RESOLVED The minutes of the meeting held on 20th July 2020 were approved; proposed by Cllr Barber and seconded by Cllr Hughes.

5. Finance

The Clerk circulated an update of finance actions undertaken during June, July, August and September, a copy of which may be accessed on the website.

5.1 September Payments

Parish Council September payments amounting to £4,806.01 had been circulated for Member's approval. Highlights include the Dovetail invoices not sent for May, June and July. It was also noted weekly grounds work is now invoiced for corner of Letitia Avenue.

IT WAS RESOLVED Members approved £4,806.01 for September. Proposed by Cllr Hughes and seconded by Cllr Woollard.

Sports Park September payments amounting to £5,698.45 had been circulated for Members approval. Highlights include gate repairs of £984.00.

IT WAS RESOLVED Members approved £5,698.45 for September. Proposed by Cllr Hughes and seconded by Cllr Nunn.

5.2 External Audit 2019-2020

Clerk reported the submission date of 30th June 2020 was achieved. All queries have been answered and agreed with PKF Littlejohn.

Signed **Chair** **Dated**

We have received confirmation email that Engagement Lead will conclude audit process and we await auditor report and certificate.

6. Progress Reports

6.1 Village Hall Management Committee
Nothing to report.

6.2 War Memorials
Nothing to report.

6.2(i) Heritage Monuments & Memorial Funding
Clerk reported the case officer at Monuments Trust has contacted her and confirmed 50% of application has been secured. This is subject to confirmation that the technical specification of materials used and work undertaken can be expanded. The clerk has contacted the contractor and a detailed specification has been forwarded to Funder. Members acknowledged the work of the Clerk and RW thanked her on behalf of the team and community.

Action: Clerk

6.3 Meriden Pool
The pool is looking very good with the efforts of the Friends Group with positive feedback from the wider community.

6.3(i) Friends Group
Clerk advised Friends have worked hard over the summer to remove and clear away all overgrown weed and vegetation on the far side of feeder stream running adjacent to new hedge. The area looks good and opens up the rear. The commitment and energy of the Friends has been great. The group met with Love Solihull Team on 7th September and priorities identified for programme of works including cutting/clearing of rear banking, vegetation at far side of pool encroaching water and tree ivy. Additional items recorded are handrail on Sleeper Bridge, levelling of ground in front of new hedging at rear of Pool. Love Solihull have promised Rangers will assist with rear banking cutting. She further reported that Friends have been put off by the Love Solihull registration and project plan paperwork to be completed.

Action: Clerk to contact Public Realm Engagement Team Leader.

6.3(ii) Management & Funding
Nothing to report.

6.4 Allotments
Clerk reported the allotments now have full occupancy once more. Contractors have undertaken a cut back of inside perimeter boundary hedge and removed weeds from pathway. The allotment holders have been busy producing an abundance of crops. All is looking good.

Signed Chair **Dated**

Clerk to check cutting back of hedge on Leys Lane boundary with Highways. There is dialogue with Trinity who maintain the open green space running alongside allotments for the wooden posts to be placed to stop parking on it.

Action: Clerk to speak to Highways and Trinity for progress update.

6.5 Footpaths/Forum

Cllr Woollard reported A45 footpath requires attention and recorded the first 2 steps of the A45 Bridge are crumbling.

Action: Clerk to contact Mr Hawley, Footpaths Officer.

6.6 Quarries Liaison Group

RW reported the momentum of the group has been lost. The last meeting was December 2019. The parish council has been lobbying different individuals to meet via Zoom without success. Cllr Diccio commented that Cllr Howell has been appointed (Cllr Bell retired) as SMBC's SANDS representative for all issues relating to the Quarries and she is the appropriate person to get the group back on track. The clerk advised that new operators have come on board and existing operators have new site managers who are unaware of their participation in the Quarry Liaison Group and its importance. Cllr Hughes recorded his disappointment.

Chair reiterated that it is not for the parish council to call the group to order; we are participating members of the Quarry Liaison Group with council representatives and a co-opted resident. However she wished to reassure members of the public that we have not given up and will continue liaising with operators to find a solution.

Action: RW/JH/Clerk to draft letter to members of Quarry Liaison Group.

6.7 Solihull Area Committee

RW reported the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 20th October 2020 via Zoom.

6.8 Tree Warden & TPO List

Nothing to report.

6.9 Community Surgeries

The clerk advised a Community Police Surgery was hosted with PCSO's Hanley and Harkin on 10th August. There were resident 4 attendees. Notes of the meeting and concerns raised may be accessed from website. Chair reported weekly updates are received from PCSO Harkin and these are posted onto social media sites for public information.

6.10 Community Speed Watch

JB advised he has now met with PCSO Harkin to start up speed watch. All details of shift patterns and availability of speed watch volunteers have been shared and Meriden speed watch will start again first week of October.

Action: Cllr Barber to liaise with PCSO Harkin.

Signed Chair **Dated**

Chair reported that speed watch carried out on Fillongley Road by West Midlands Police recorded 17 speeders, one without MOT and one under the influence of drugs.

6.11 HS2

RW advised updates continue to be received which all are posted onto social media sites. Recently works include A452 road network and M42 erection of bridge with overnight closures. The community engagement team are due to visit again in November 2020. Cllr Diccico added that the HS2 Advisory Group is meeting at the end of October and he will be happy to receive community issues/concerns that may be raised and recorded in this formal forum.

Action: Public and parish council to send comments to Cllr Diccico either direct or via the clerk.

6.12 Meriden Sports Park

RW reported the park management are following government guidelines. Notices are posted what users can and cannot do. The Pavilion is not being hired out; football teams are allowed to access change/toilet facilities 2 at a time. Cllr Barber has set up QR Code for Track & Trace. All social distance protocols are being followed. No complaints have been received.

6.13 Meriden Sport & Recreation Trust

JH advised a new Trustee has been appointed and the Trust continues to advertise for more. The small grants application process has re-opened. The fund is on track and could prove more profitable than previous year.

7. Clerk's Report

Clerk reported all matters included in Agenda items but was happy to take questions. A substantial period has been taken up with legal matters. A copy of clerks report may be accessed from website.

8. District and Ward Councillor Reports

Cllr Diccico advised

- Meriden Gate – he is following up with drainage and highways officers;
- There has been positive feedback on the proposal to close Leys Lane as a through road. Residents are supportive to alleviate traffic using it as a rat run/cut through;
- Signed up as a Community Champion which means alerting residents to latest COVID guidance on social media sites;
- The Local Plan will be going to Cabinet in October before its 6 week public consultation. Meriden has not done too badly in terms of new housing allocations. There remains a risk with developers identifying land in Meriden. The Neighbourhood Development Plan will have impact and will be submitted to Inspector at end of year. We have reached a critical point with development.

Signed Chair **Dated**

Chair reaffirmed the NDP group had worked around the Local Plan with what had already been identified for Meriden. Cllr Diccio advised this was manageable and SMBC are trying to hold this line as part of their 5 year land supply and maintain control; there is nothing to alarm residents of Meriden.

- May Elections 2021 – hopeful that this will go ahead.

9. Correspondence & Communication

All correspondence has been circulated and emailed to Members.

10. Meriden Village Matters

10.1 Meriden Library

RW reported the co-location of the parish council and library is on hold. The existing foundations are not sufficient to take the increased weight of using the first floor as an office. There is an issue around Solihull funding works as this is likely to be greater than SMBC are prepared to put in a partnership arrangement. There appear to be no options to consider and this is a disappointing outcome after 8 years of discussion. Library services wished to learn of the parish council's aspiration for the building and it's future. This is discussion for the parish council and it is recommended that this be tabled at the next Development Day. The library is a much valued community asset and it was always considered to be a community hub/shared space and parish council office which would increase the access to residents. Funding avenues to be explored are Heritage Lottery and HS2. Cllr Diccio is to follow up with HS2.

Action: RW/Clerk/Cllr Diccio.

10.2 Village Commemoration

10.2(i) VE75

Deferred to 2021.

10.2(ii) Remembrance Sunday

Chair reported meeting with Rev Lilley and discussing changing COVID guidance. Morally it was not appropriate to hold a Remembrance Sunday Service at the War Memorial as in previous years. Currently guidance restricts a maximum of 30 people at any community event (**since changed to 6**) and last year the number attending was in excess of 200. St Laurence Church and the Parish Council have therefore agreed that the Churches will put together a Remembrance Service on social media sites to include members and groups of the community who will participate in the service itself and wreath laying. Chair of Council will be filmed laying a wreath and this will be incorporated into the service. There has been no guidance from Solihull MBC other to wait until nearer the time.

Cllr Diccio advised the uncertainty that Solihull is dealing currently specifically the progression of the virus and stricter measures being put in place. He endorses the parish council decision in light of new guidance and awaits the Church information of service on social media sites.

Action: St Laurence Church and Parish Council.

Signed Chair Dated

Clerk: Barbara Bland

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10.3 Meriden Gate

Clerk reported various resident complaints regarding maintenance of open space. All concerns have been called in to SMBC including freehold transfer of park, adoption of highways and public open space is being pursued by SMBC Corporate Legal Team.

Action: Clerk/Solicitor.

10.4 Taylor Wimpey (Transfer of Allotments/freehold land)

Clerk advised this is being concluded by our Solicitor.

Action: Clerk/Solicitor.

10.5 Highways

Chair summarised Leys Lane consultation has ceased. Fillongley Road traffic calming has been completed. The 20mph signs for COVID around the Green has reduced speeds of traffic but ceased on 4th September. Cllr Diccico replied that the 20mph signs are likely to stay in place due to restrictions. The Covid Community Briefing may shed some light in this regard.

Action: Clerk to invite Paul Tovey and Highways Team to October's parish council meeting.

10.6 Land Registry & Ownership

Clerk reported she has received plaque for Village Green status as a Centenary Field.

Action: Clerk to get sign erected on Green.

10.7 Local Council Award Scheme

RW stated that JB/Clerk are finalising website content to meet criteria content requirements and this continues to be a work in progress.

Action: All

10.7(i) Website

RW reported the website is looking good and nears completion.

Action: JB/RW/JH/BB.

10.8 Meriden Public & Community Transport

The clerk advised complaints had been received from concerned users of the X20 service operated by Johnsons. Due to safe distance on public transport there is half the capacity available on buses therefore there have been incidences where users of the service have been denied boarding and left to wait an hour for the next bus. Transport for West Midlands have spoken to Johnsons who will not be putting extra resource onto this route. Currently they are operating a 23 seater single deck bus and data provided suggests only a maximum of 21 passengers have been carried. Cllr Diccico confirmed this as he has been included in the emails from complainant, TfWM and parish council.

Action: Parish Council/Cllr Diccico to monitor service with TfWM and receive update for October meeting.

Signed Chair **Dated**

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10.9 Dementia Friends/First Aiders/Dementia & Autism Training, Business Network
JH advised the business network pages continue to be updated with new guidelines. Funding is available for Mental Health Awareness training but it is post coded and we need volunteers to come forward.

Action: Cllr Hughes.

10.10 Millison's Wood Telephone Box

Clerk reported the telephone box has been cleared of books and cleansed. It is to be used as a First Response station with a defibrillator sited inside. Electric supply remains live and it is ready for install. Residents to be thanked for their previous efforts of maintaining a community book "drop, grab & go" but are reminded not to fill it up again with books. Cllr Barber agreed to put a message onto social media sites.

Action: Cllr Barber to post message on social media sites advising future use and no more books please.

10.10(i) Defibrillator

Clerk advised 20% funding secured from WALC for the purchase of a defibrillator. Contractor has been out to survey telephone box and electrical supply current for battery life.

Action: Clerk to order and arrange installation.

11. Planning Matters

11.1 Neighbourhood Planning Update

Chair advised that Regulation 16 consultation concluded 25th August. All comments received from the local community and businesses will be input into the consultation outcome. Solihull have confirmed this week that an independent national examiner has been appointed. We await his outcome with a view to receiving his comments/recommendations and moving to Referendum by May 2021.

Action: NDP Steering Group and SMBC.

11.1(i) Locality Funding Bid

Chair advised a Locality have confirmed new funding award. Clerk reaffirmed a successful outcome however we had not been awarded the full amount applied for given the parish council were at the limit of the £18,000 maximum to be applied for. The award will cover the external costs for consultant and some PR resources as we move into Referendum stage for conclusion. Chair thanked the clerk for her work and successful outcome. Clerk confirmed receipt of Offer of Grant and paperwork for her to accept the offer.

Action: Clerk/RW

11.2 Neighbourhood Community/Ward Action Plan

Chair reported a work in progress.

Action: All

Signed Chair **Dated**

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11.3 Solihull Local Plan Review

Cllr Diccico had reported on this under item 8 District and Ward Councillor Reports.

11.4 Planning Application Status Updates

Cllr Hughes had circulated planning updates to Members for August and September which may be accessed from website clicking onto Planning.

Cllr Hughes explained that a quarry application had been received and the parish council had met with the Applicant, Agent and Planner. He recorded the parish council thanks to Solihull’s case officer for extending the consultation submission date to allow for this meeting. It was noted that the applicant’s operation was proposed for Berkswell Quarry and Meriden had not been advised as a Statutory Consultee. However the Estate Manager for Berkswell had notified the Clerk.

Action: Cllr Hughes to draft a response to the latest planning application for Berkswell Quarry.

Cllr Hughes advised Members that he is stepping down as Chair of Planning Committee and Cllr Woollard has agreed to take over; however he will retain his responsibility for quarry planning and associated works within the Local Planning Authority framework.

12. Climate Change

Cllr Hughes advised a call for volunteers to come forward has resulted in two interested residents to join the Climate Change Group.

Action: Cllr Hughes

13. Youth Council

Cllr Hughes advised that he is waiting to hear back from Heart of England School. However students and young people are interested. He advises the Youth Council will be launched independently. He further advised that the Youth Council is detailed in the Meriden Mag asking for young people to come forward and join the Council and prove a voice for what they want and the future of Meriden. This has also been promoted on Facebook.

Action: Cllr Hughes

14. Digital Review

The digital review has been completed and the parish council is working well with new technology being Zoom and Teams conferencing with log in links providing public participation for those residents who wish to join the meeting; Facebook live streaming and recording of parish council meetings is also effectively reaching residents who wish to follow the meeting but at a distance. *This item will be removed as a standing item on future agendas.*

Action: Clerk to remove from October’s agenda and thereafter.

Signed Chair **Dated**

15. Parish Council Development Day

Clerk would welcome a development day given the recent disappointment of the library co-location and the parish council vision of its future; we also need to start the budget setting process and identify projects for 2021 (Neighbourhood Community/Ward Action Plan). We could also review the parish website for Local Council Award Scheme. Members agreed and after consideration Thursday 22nd October 2020 10.00-12.00 was confirmed.

Action: All

15.1 Apprenticeship Scheme

Chair advised she and Cllr Hughes had looked into this; it was future proofing the parish council post 2023 with a view to a clerk being trained up and assisting with the workload which continues to increase. Given the COVID working guidance and the existing clerk working from home, this is deferred until 2021. However a discussion to consider the opportunity will on the agenda for the development day 22nd October 2020.

16. Annual Parish Assembly

Chair reported there are new media platforms available for parish councils so they may facilitate an Annual Parish Assembly for the wider community to participate. Cllr Hughes to look into.

Action: Cllr Hughes

17. Casual Vacancy

The closing date for applications to be received is 30th September 2020.

Action: Clerk

18. Community Champions

Chair advised this initiative has been set up by Solihull for parished and unparished areas to provide a source of information sharing. The community champions will be raising awareness with all up to date information being posted onto parish council social media sites. There will also be a need to access residents who do not use social media using noticeboards or print outs dropped through letterboxes. Both the Chair and the Clerk are Community Champions.

18.1 COVID-19

Chair advised the emergency help line setup pre lockdown received 520 calls. It went quiet at point of guideline relaxation however with new guidance received and local restrictions imposed by Solihull we are planning to set it up again as the view is it will be needed. The purpose is to support our vulnerable and self-isolating residents including those with Covid and other illnesses, with shopping, collection of medications and providing a listening ear. We are looking for volunteers to maintain the telephone line and we are currently writing to our volunteer team to come forward and putting out messages on social media sites for new volunteers.

Signed Chair **Dated**

The work of Meriden's Emergency Team is recognised nationally and locally. Chair recorded her personal thanks to all those who have volunteered and helped with this initiative.

Cllr Nunn asked about temperature checks for volunteers and vulnerable residents. Chair advised that all volunteers have been issued with full PPE that is worn when dropping shopping and medications to homes within the no contact rule. She said it was a good idea but training would be required. Cllr Nunn advised thermometers are infrared and contactless. Cllr Hughes reiterated this is a good idea to minimise the spread of COVID through the community.

Action: Chair to take to Community Champion Briefing for consideration.

19. Councillor's reports and items for future agenda

Nothing to report.

20. Date of Next Meeting

The next **Parish Council meeting** will be held on Monday 19th October 2020 at 19.30 hours via Zoom Conferencing.

The meeting closed at 21.00 hours.

Members of the public left the meeting.

Signed Chair Dated

21. CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS (Closed Meeting)

21.1 NALC Pay Award (Clerk Remuneration)

Chair explained receipt of the Local Government Pay Agreement 2020-2021 and asked the Clerk to expand. The clerk advised that the proposal of 2.75% pay award had been agreed between the National Employers and the NJC Trade Union. This award is to be backdated to 1st April 2020.

Members considered the Local Government Services' Pay Agreement 2020-21 and unanimously approved the agreement and for the award to be backdated to 1st April 2020.

IT WAS RESOLVED: Members approved the Local Government Services' Pay Agreement 2020-21. Proposed by Members unanimously.

21.2 HMRC Increase to Home Working Allowance due to COVID-19

The clerk was asked to explain what this meant as there was confusion with tax implications. The clerk advised that she receives a one off award annually of £216.00 tax free and not included in payroll for home working. This payment is not taxable. HMRC have agreed this be increased by £2.00 per week to £312.00 per annum to compensate COVID home workers. Therefore Members are asked to consider HMRC's guidance and approve this increased sum to be paid 31st March 2021 for financial year 2020-2021.

IT WAS RESOLVED: Members approved HMRC's recommendation to increase the clerk's home working allowance from £216.00 to £312.00 per annum. Proposed by Members unanimously.

Chair thanked Members and closed the meeting at 21.15.

Signed Chair Dated

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