

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY – VIDEO CONFERENCING MINUTES

STURMER PARISH COUNCIL

Ian Brown
Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Email: sturmerpc@gmail.com

72 St. Edmunds Fields
Dunmow
Essex, CM6 2AN

Minutes of the **MEETING** of **STURMER PARISH COUNCIL** held via **VIDEO-CONFERENCE CALL** on **THURSDAY 30 APRIL 2020** at **11:30 AM**

Present: Cllr Garrod Cllr Porth Cllr Collar Cllr Carter Cllr Choat Cllr Jones

Member of the public

Prior to the meeting being opened the Chairman paid tribute to Captain Tom Moore and his fantastic effort in raising Millions for the NHS, which sentiment the members wholeheartedly agreed

20/01	NOTE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE None received
20/02	DECLARATION OF INTEREST FOR APRIL MEETING None declared
20/03	APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETING AT STURMER VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2020 Cllr Garrod requested an amendment to the official minutes be recorded relating to Item 19/144, to reflect the fact that the Village Hall Management Committee had NOT agreed to the installation of a Defibrillator and that a letter was read out at that meeting from a disappointed resident who as a result had withdrawn their offer to fund the purchase of the Defibrillator. RESOLUTION – Amendment accepted, minutes adopted as true record, Proposed Cllr Carter, Seconded Cllr Collar
20/04	DEVOLVE EMERGENCY DECISION MAKING POWERS TO THE CLERK (LGA 1972 S. 101) RESOLUTION – Devolve Emergency Decision Making Power to the Clerk, Proposed Cllr Collar, Seconded Cllr Carter 20/04(i) – AGREE EMERGENCY DECISION MAKING AND STAFF/CONTRACTUAL PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN THE ABSENCE OF THE CLERK DUE TO THE AFFECTS OF COVID-19 RESOLUTION – Agree Emergency Powers be devolved to Cllr Garrod, Cllr Carter and Cllr Porth in the event of the Clerk unable to fulfil their duties, Proposed Cllr Choat, Seconded Cllr Collar
20/05	DISTRICT AND COUNTY CLLRS REPORT(S) Full report attached at APPENDIX A. Dist Cllr Garrod noted the 30mph ROUNDELS were now painted on the highway
20/06	RECEIVE CLERK’S REPORT & NOTE CORRESPONDENCE ELECTIONS – SUSPENDED UNTIL MAY 2021 ESSEX-VELO - CANCELLED LIGHTING CONTRACTOR – SUSPENDED OPERATIONS EALC TRAINING – MAJORITY SUSPENDED FLOOD ACTION GROUP – REPORT ATTACHED LHP – PANEL HOLDING VIRTUAL MEETING AGAINST SHORTENED AGENDA PLAY AREA - CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE – SAFETY INSPECTION SUSPENDED, RECOMMENDED PLAY AREAS AND EQUIPMENT BE LOCKED AND MADE SECURE AGAINST POSSIBLE USE S106 – APPLICATION NOT SUBMITTED PENDING RECEIPT OF ALTERNATIVE EQUIPMENT QUOTES Eleemosynary Charity – Cheque received in the sum of £1,125 as contribution towards the proposed disabled person accessible play equipment purchase, grateful thanks expressed by the council, CLERK to acknowledge receipt RESIDENTS COMMENTS/QUESTIONS DEFIBRILLATOR – Disappointment conveyed from a resident over the continuing lack of a Defibrillator in the community despite their willingness to contribute towards the cost of the purchase and those with the appropriate authority and skills prepared to provide free training. Cllr Jones to adopt the management of this project and prepare a report for the next council meeting.

	<p>STURMER FLOOD ACTION GROUP – Four reports attached at APPENDIX B which includes an overview from two well attended video-conference meetings with the National Flood Forum (NFF)</p> <p>The representative from the SFAG (Sturmer Flood Action Group) attending this meeting advised that up to eight of the properties eligible for the Flood Protection Grants had applied for the up to £5,000 value grants on offer, which funds went towards the installation of flood protection equipment from an appointed manufacturer. The County Council award the funds with any shortfall over and above the £5,000 being the responsibility of the property owner, should that arise. Whilst all affected properties have been advised in writing it was felt the Parish Council could assist by agreeing to repeat a mailing to encourage those who have yet to apply, especially as there is now no need to provide photographic evidence of flooding. The scheme is being promoted on local social media and in the village magazine. Cllr Garrod agreed to liaise with the SFAG to organise that mailing.</p>
20/07	<p>FINANCE – RECEIVE FINANCIAL STATEMENT - AGREE PAYMENTS, APPOINT AUTHORISER RESOLUTION – Approve payments, Proposed Cllr Collar, Seconded Cllr Choat – Appointed authoriser – Cllr Carter. Finance Statement at APPENDIX C</p> <p>20/07(i) – RECEIVE EXEMPTION CERTIFICATE 2019-2020</p> <p>20/07(ii) – AGREE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019-2020 CAN BE SIGNED REMOTELY – DOCUMENT CIRCULATED TO MEMBERS</p> <p>RESOLUTION – Agree Governance Statement can be signed remotely, Proposed Cllr Choat, Seconded Cllr Carter</p> <p>20/07(iii) – AGREE ANNUAL ACCOUNTING STATEMENT 2019-2020 CAN BE SIGNED REMOTELY – DOCUMENT CIRCULATED TO MEMBERS</p> <p>RESOLUTION – Agree Accounting Statement can be signed remotely, Proposed Cllr Carter, Seconded Cllr Choat</p>
20/08	<p>REVIEW & COMMENT ON CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATIONS/APEALS</p> <p>APPEAL - APP/Z1510/W/19/3241165 - 19/00660/FUL – 8 Abbotts Cottages , The Street - Extensions to annex to form a three bedroom dwelling.</p> <p>APPEAL DISMISSED</p>
20/09	<p>CONSIDER AND COMMENT ON VG52 LAND SWAP OPTIONS</p> <p>Negotiations are on-going, Cllr Porth highlighted the fact that these matters are quite likely to become commercially sensitive and that under Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972 (Confidence and Admission of Strangers) it would prove necessary to exclude the public and hold this item “in camera”.</p>
20/10	<p>CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE QUOTE TO SUPPLY INCLUSIVE PLAY EQUIPMENT</p> <p>Having reviewed the alternative proposals it was unanimously agreed by a show of hands that the council would proceed with the proposals from Sovereign – CLERK to ACTION S106 application seeking funds to the value of £5,664 to enable the purchase to proceed.</p>
20/11	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 09 JUNE (Video Conference meeting) – CLOSE – 12:24am</p>

Signed.....Date.....

APPENDIX A

District Councillor's Report 30th April 2020 to Sturmer Parish Council (Cllr. Diana Garrod - Bumpstead Ward)

30mph roundels provided in Sturmer

Earlier in March two 30mph roundels were provided on the road at either end of the village as part of traffic management and to deter problematic speeding vehicles. Whilst I have been unable to ascertain

the actual cost, the Local Highway Panel agendas dated 23rd January and 26th March 2020 indicates that the sum of £5,500 was allocated from the budget.

Closure of Rowley Hill and Baythorne End

Temporary Traffic Regulation Order for the intended closure of Rowley Hill, The Street Sturmer Road to Baythorne End is due to commence on 27th May 2020 for 6 days (10am to 3pm). The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while Essex County Council undertakes Surface Dressing. Further information can be found at the one.network website.

Haverhill Golf Club (Sturmer)

I have written to the Leaders of Braintree District Council, Essex County Council and The Rt Hon James Cleverley MP asking them to consider opening golf clubs in Essex. I have received a positive response from James Cleverley who advised me that he has passed my suggestion to the appropriate Minister for consideration to the proposal that they may be reopened to allow members to use them for their daily exercise whilst maintaining social distancing. He also mentioned that he appreciates the points I raised about local clubs in the current economic environment.

Business Grants

Braintree District Council has administered £21.1 million in grants to support 1,819 businesses facing financial difficulties as a result of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, placing it in the top 15% of Local Authorities in the country. The authority ranked 46th out of 314 other Local Authorities in England (from data published on April 20th) in the payment of grants to eligible businesses. The Council was tasked with distributing £31.57 million in emergency grants (from central government) to support small businesses and businesses within the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors impacted by the recent forced coronavirus (Covid-19) lockdown. The authority is offering grants of up to £25,000 to eligible businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors and a grant of £10,000 to small businesses in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief. Business grants have been issued to just over 70% (1,819 out of 2,557) of eligible businesses so far, with approximately another 200 applications in the pipeline to be processed and paid this week. Essex business are encouraged to apply for Government funding support, as many firms are not yet accessing what they are entitled to. Further details about the various government measures and eligibility can be found at: www.essex.gov.uk/news or www.gov.uk or www.braintree.gov.uk.

Adoption of first Local Development Order

Braintree District Council adopts its first Local Development Order to encourage business onto the new Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park planned for Great Notley. The Council is pressing ahead with plans, despite the current lockdown, in readiness for when business start moving again as and when the coronavirus restrictions are changed or lifted by Central Government. The exciting thing for business about the use of a LDO is that it automatically grants planning permission for certain forms of development and land uses within particular zones on a site, making it easier and quicker for businesses to build the premises they need without the need to apply for separate planning permission (as long as they meet certain conditions). The Order will allow for the development to high quality office, manufacturing and industrial space. It will also allow for the creation of a central hub which could be home to a hotel and other facilities which will add to the experience of employees working on the site. Proposals also include the creation of a high quality landscaped environment where roads and paths are tree-lined with green buffers and wildlife corridors. Close to the central hub will be habitat with ponds, tussock grassland, hedgerows and trees. This LDO will last for 10 years after adoption.

Parks and Public Open Spaces Including Burial Grounds & Cemeteries

I am pleased to confirm that Braintree District Council took a pragmatic view back in mid-March to keep these public facilities open, as it recognised their importance in helping to maintain the physical and mental wellbeing of residents. They are a lifeline for those without gardens to take recreational exercise during the pandemic and there are clear benefits to taking fresh air and being at one with nature. The only exception is the County Park at Great Notley which is managed and operated by Essex County Council as part of their country parks service. Unfortunately, they took the difficult decision to temporarily close this and other country parks across Essex owing to the difficulty in maintaining social distancing. Braintree Council also took a sympathetic and compassionate approach to keeping cemeteries open for relatives to visit graves and to allow funeral services to take place in accordance with the government guidelines.

BDC & Essex Welfare Service

Braintree Council's hub has received over 140 referrals from the Essex Welfare Service for people requesting support for shopping, collection of medication, befriending and mental health support. BDC continues to signpost these to Town & Parish Council's and community groups or help them via the Community Transport Team. The CTT are also delivering food bank parcels to those that are unable to collect from the foodbank themselves. Unwanted food parcels are also being collected from individuals and donated to the foodbank. BDC has also contacted approximately 500 people that the government has identified as being high risk and requiring additional support. If you, or someone you know needs help with medicine or food supplies, you can contact the Essex Welfare Service: Call: 0300 303 9988. Website: essexwelfareservice.org.uk or Facebook page: Essex Coronavirus Action. Opening hours Monday to Friday 8am to 7pm, Saturday and Sunday; 10am to 2pm.

Community Support & Volunteering

Community 360, an independent charity who lead on local community action to improve quality of life, have put together a dedicated webpage of useful Braintree District services and contact to support you over this difficult time, including; pharmacies, doctor surgeries, accessing hospitals, befriending services, home to home calls and travelling. If you or someone you know needs any support, they can contact: engagement7@community360.org.uk or telephone 01376 550507.

Bin Collection Changes & Garden Waste

As the usual early May bank holiday Monday has been changed to Friday 8th May and includes the weekend in order to commemorate VE Day 75, revisions have been made to the waste and recycling collection dates. Collection will not take place on Monday 11th May. This will now be on Tuesday 12th May. Please remember that the Garden Waste collection service remains suspended due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, but this is being regularly reviewed.

Changes at Halstead Hospital

Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership have announced temporary changes to the care provided at Halstead Hospital. They will be temporarily relocating all staff and services to Braintree Community Hospital. They will step-down and discharge existing patients in Halstead Hospital during April. New patients who would have normally attended Halstead Hospital will be referred to Braintree Community Hospital. Normal services will resume when the current Covid-19 situation allows.

Cllr. Diana Garrod
District Councillor - Bumpstead Ward

APPENDIX B (4 reports)

Sturmer Flood Action Group Report(s)

Zoom meeting with National Flood Forum (NFF)

14 April 2020

Comments

Last week we were asked to find out what arrangements have been made in the light of Covid 19 if there is flooding now.

Many groups had receive no reply or a very poor one.

I received no reply from Essex after a very gentle nudge on Facebook – I didn't want to press this as we all need to stay safe.

The meeting agreed this should be addressed in the future Emergency Plans e.g. move refuges from current centres to hotels so people can isolate. Our refuge is Sturmer Hall but I doubt there are enough rooms for this if flooding occurred in a pandemic.

The possibility of flooding in June or July was raised because of summer downpours and NFF agreed to approach Government for instructions to LLFA (Lead Local Flood Authorities e.g. Essex CC) to make provision as Covid 19 will be ongoing.

Strategic flood installations will still be operated e.g. flood park in Haverhill?

EA is asking LLFA to consider their response to flooding during lockdown.

EA say there is a low risk of flooding at the moment.

EA prepared successfully for possible high tides at Easter despite reduced staff numbers and home working.

Various groups agreed to share their Emergency Plans. Many pointed out the problems of volunteers being over 70 during lockdown.

We all thanked NFF for meeting which was interesting and gave a chance for groups to meet which is not normally available.

Zoom meeting with National Flood Forum (NFF)

21 April 2020

Comments

Paul Cobbing, Chief Executive of the National Flood Forum had arranged another Zoom meeting for flood groups. The NFF is a charity to help support and represent people at risk of flooding.

The meeting was joined by similar groups as in the past two weeks.

Paul has arranged for Hugh Ellis of the Town and Country Planning Association to take part next week and we discussed what questions to ask him.

At our first meeting we asked for a meeting on how to engage effectively with the planning process.

These are some of the questions suggested:

1. Should inspection and enforcement of SUDs be carried out by an independent body instead of building control/planning officers ? – Departments are under staffed and under pressure to meet Government housing targets regardless of flood risk;
2. What advice can Hugh give on how to challenge planning applications – Outline permission is given and flood alleviation is only considered later as reserved matters;
3. What case law exists where developers have created flood problems for existing communities ? ;
4. How can Neighbourhood Plans be more community lead and not just based on a template ? ;
5. Could SUDs be the subject of a financial bond from the developer like adopting Highways with this being considered at the Planning Committee stage ? ;
6. Does Hugh agree that the law should be changed so Water Companies can ask for funds for infrastructure from the developer before connecting developments to the existing foul water system?
7. How can flood groups join together to influence changes on flooding?
8. What route should flood groups take for a legal challenge to developers? – e.g. Judicial Review, Ombudsman
9. What approach should flood groups take to planning applications where the Local Plan has not been agreed?
10. How can flood groups be taken seriously when challenging Flood Risk Assessments? – Even when using experts (sometimes available through NFF) their views are dismissed;
11. Can Section 106 agreements be used to obtain flood improvements and can this be applied across County borders?
12. How can “creeping development” be halted ? – e.g. not just large estates but small ones that add up to causing a flood problem.

I will send my comments on next week's meeting in due course.

Linda Bevan

Zoom meeting with National Flood Forum (NFF)

28 April 2020

The meeting was joined by 45 people from all parts of England.

Hugh Ellis of the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) joined to answer questions about how flood groups can engage with the planning process successfully.

He is Head of Policy at TCPA. It is a charity to give guidance to planning practitioners and lobby government. They also train Councillors.

It has been working in the UK and Europe on why the system is not working.

The planning response to flooding and climate change is a major concern.

The planning system has been hijacked by Government demands to provide more housing.

He felt flood groups should continue to challenge planning applications.

It was important to use the correct language e.g.

Don't say – I object to building on this land because I won't be able to walk my dog on it

Do say – Building on this land will lead to loss of amenity for the community

The meeting asked for some written guidance on how to object on flood grounds to planning applications.

However, Hugh felt that it was often too late to be effective by the time the application is made and flood groups should do more at the Local Plan stage.

It is a legal requirement for Local Plans to allow for Climate Change but the majority do not (*I think when I spoke to the Local Plans Officer at Braintree she told me that their Local Plan does NOT take Climate Change into consideration*).

Where plans do take this into consideration they consider Carbon Emissions not temperatures rising which will lead to more rainfall and flooding.

Cleaning up after floods has an impact on carbon emissions.

Research shows that the temperature rise will be much higher and cause more rain than is allowed for in Government models.

Environmental Charities are seeking Judicial Reviews to challenge decisions taken with faulty figures. The charities are saying the level of protection for citizens is inadequate as climate change is getting worse. Flood groups might be able to seek help from these bodies.

Hugh felt flood groups should challenge Flood Risk Assessments. They are prepared by developers and often have simple errors because of lack of local knowledge.

The Government has promised a review of the planning system but this has been delayed by lockdown.

Flooding should be considered at the very start of the planning process.

Enforcement needed to be reviewed. The maintenance of SUDs was raised.

The meeting felt that all groups should combine to seek a review of national policy on flooding.

This could be led by NFF who had done similar work on FloodRe (to ensure all flooded properties can get insurance at a reasonable rate).

It was suggested all groups could write to their MPs for support.

It was important that flood groups did not appear to be anti-housing. They could pro-actively suggest where housing could go and not cause flooding and how the properties could be made flood resistant at the design stage.

Paul Cobbing (Chairman) agreed a group could be formed to consider influencing planning policy and a number of Government bodies be approached. He would discuss this with colleagues this week.

It was agreed the next meeting would consider SUDs.

Linda Bevan

SFAG update for Parish Council meeting on 30 April 2020

Property Protection Grants from ECC

Rivendell was due to have flood doors etc fitted next week but this has been delayed by lockdown.

Pippins and neighbour have had initial survey.

The Old School House has applied for a grant.

Zoom meetings with National Flood Forum

Linda Bevan has joined zoom meetings with NFF and flood groups.

Information has been sent to the Chairman and Clerk.

Woody Dams

ECC had installed one woody dam at the golf course as lockdown started. Others are delayed.

ECC hope to arrange for dams in the deep ditch between The Baulk and Sturmer Hall in the autumn and have been in contact with the farmer.

Sturmer Station Bridge (Water Lane)

We understand the Parish Council has been asked to sign a licence for bore holes for works on the bridge.

Gullies

We saw gullies being cleared on the main road on 7 April 2020.

The Maltings

ECC have delayed further work to help with flooding here until after lockdown.

APPENDIX C

Sturmer Parish Council Finance Statement - April 2020											
Date	Supplier	Description	Invoice	BACS/DD	Minute Ref	Rec	Credit	Debit	VAT	NETT	Cost Centre
06-Apr-20	HMRC	VAT	N/A	BGC			640.62				HMRC
15-Apr-20	Haven Power	Electricity	9861/9863	DD				48.04	2.29	45.75	Utility
15-Apr-20	A&J Lightin	Lighting	34039	DD				27.00	4.50	22.50	Lighting
16-Apr-20	HMRC	Q4	N/A	FPO				66.40	0.00	66.40	HMRC
17-Apr-20	BDC	Street Clean		BGC			76.27			0.00	Maintain
28-Apr-20	Employee	Salary	PAYE	SO				404.73	0.00	404.73	Clerk
30-Apr-20	HP	Ink cartridges	5040444	FPO				21.00	3.50	17.50	Stationery
30-Apr-20	EALC	Subscriptions	12709	FPO				164.22	0.00	164.22	Subs
30-Apr-20	DH Maintenance	Parish Maintenance	10-Apr	FPO				145.00	0.00	145.00	Maintain
30-Apr-20	BDC	Precept Pt1	N/A	BGC			4,666.00			0.00	Precept
30-Apr-20	BDC	Tax Surplus	N/A	BGC			105.00			0.00	Precept
30-Apr-20	Withersfield Hall F	Top soil and seed	50420	FPO				111.00	16.00	95.00	Maintain
30-Apr-20	Open Spaces Soc	Subscriptions	76186	FPO				45.00		45.00	Subs
APRIL							5,487.89	1,032.39	26.29	1,006.10	