



Chiddingfold Parish Council

The Banking House
The Green
Chiddingfold
Surrey
GU8 4TU

Tel: 07557 344499
www.chiddingfold-pc.gov.uk

Chairman: Councillor Daniel Hall
Parish Clerk: Lauren Blatherwick CiLCA PSLCC
Deputy Clerk and RFO: Sue Frossard CiLCA PSLCC
clerk@chiddingfold-pc.gov.uk

TO MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The Chairman having convened an extraordinary meeting of the Chiddingfold Parish Council, you are hereby summonsed to attend that meeting on Wednesday 25 March 2020 at the Banking House, The Green at 12noon, for the purpose of transacting the following business.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC are encouraged and welcome to attend Parish Council meetings and are invited to put questions, relevant to items on the agenda, to the Council between 12.05 pm and 12.15pm.

COVID-19 – The members of the public are asked to abide by the government guidance on self-isolation, quarantine and social distancing.

Signed: **Lauren Blatherwick**
Lauren Blatherwick, Clerk to the Parish Council

Date: **19 March 2020**

AGENDA

1.00 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive and accept apologies for absence.

2.00 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

If an interest has not yet been disclosed in the Council's Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, the Member must declare it here and notify the Monitoring Officer of it within 28 days. Where a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest, the Member must not vote or speak on the agenda item in which it arises, unless a dispensation has been granted, or do anything to influence other Members in regard to that item.

To receive declarations of pecuniary and other interests not previously notified to the WBC Monitoring Officer and to consider any requests for dispensations.

3.00 COVID-19 – IMPACT ON COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

To consider the impact the Covid-19 virus and the government response on the administration of this Council and decide on any necessary actions going forward to protect the Council functions and the health of the public, council members and council staff.

PROPOSED to resolve:

1) to immediately suspend the current regime of Council and Committee meetings;

2) not to call an Annual Parish Meeting for 2020; and

3) to approve an addition to Standing Orders for a further scheme of delegation in circumstances when Council meetings are suspended due to emergency as follows:

8A. SUSPENSION OF MEETINGS

Should the holding of Council Meetings be suspended as a result of civil emergency, the implementation of government advice / restrictions on direct contact in relation to national health, or other emergency, the Clerk has delegated authority to take decisions in pursuance of the provision of ongoing Council services and business and in relation to new Council policy and functions arising from the circumstances that precipitated the suspension of Council Meetings. In non-urgent situations the Clerk should action the business having sought in writing the views of all councillors with not less than 3 working days notice. Decisions made under such delegations shall be noted at the next meeting of the council. In urgent situations, SO 8 applies.



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CLERK'S BRIEFING

DATE: 19.03.2020

RE: COVID-19 - COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

The impact of the Covid-19 virus is being felt further and harder across all areas of life, including local government.

The due process of council meetings creates difficulties as meetings are required to be in person and to be public, they therefore pose a potential public health risk. In addition, the demographic of local councils pre-disposes them to the likelihood of members needing to socially distance themselves for medical reasons.

It seems increasingly likely that councillors will not be available to attend meetings, making achieving a quorum difficult. Also, the Council as an employer has a duty to staff safety.

Government is looking at legislation to give more flexibility of time for the Annual Council Meeting (currently required to be held and to be held in May) and is said to be looking into options for permitting remote meetings, but at present this is not in place and it remains to be seen how this will be achieved practically. Such meetings would still need to be in public and not merely a version of a conference call. Even if permitted, there must be confidence that councillors will be able use the new system.

In view of the above many local councils are suspending ordinary and committee meetings and putting in place alternative arrangements.

The Chairman is of the view that Council Meetings and Committee Meetings and the Annual Parish Meeting should be suspended at this time.

Legal requirements are that the Council holds an Annual Council Meeting in May and plus 3 others, we are therefore fully compliant in 2019-20, but the 2020-21 situation is more difficult because of the time requirement to hold the Annual Council Meeting in May. If legislation is not changed, before May this will need to be considered in light of circumstances at the time.

In addition, the Accounting and Audit Regulations 2015 require that the Annual Governance Statement and Annual Statement of Accounts are approved at a meeting of the Council within a very specific period (still to be notified for this year). Unless the regulatory requirements are changed it is highly likely that a meeting will be required for this purpose, or the audit will fail. Therefore, notwithstanding any suspension of meetings, a further ECM may be needed to deal with audit requirements.

We are unprecedented times and we can only seek to do our best within the circumstances. Other councils are facing this same dilemma and in due course further government guidance is expected.

The current meeting time-table was set by Council at its Annual meeting. A decision to suspend the meeting timetable should be made by Council.

If meetings are not quorate I shall continue to arrange them and send out summonses. Whether they take place will be determined by whether they are quorate.

If meetings are suspended (or do not take place due to being inquorate) the Council is reliant on the scheme of delegation for conduct of business. Currently standing orders provide some basic delegated functions (planning where there isn't a meeting in time for a response, running of the office, running the allotments within the budget etc) and for delegated decision making by the Clerk in respect of urgent business.

CURRENT SOs:

8. URGENT BUSINESS

The Council delegates powers to the Proper Officer to transact urgent business on its behalf.

a. Urgent business is business that

i) requires urgent action be taken before the next ordinary meeting of the Council; and

ii) falls outside of the timescales for convening an extraordinary meeting, or it is impractical to call such a meeting (for example where there are insufficient members for such meeting to be quorate).

b. Wherever possible the Proper Officer will action the business after consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and any relevant Committees, Sub-Committees or Working Groups.

c. Urgent financial expenditure must be in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the Council.

d. Any exercise of delegated powers under this order shall be notified to the Council as soon as practicable.

Council can choose to go further and amend SOs to allow for the continuation of standard council service provision and business (which isn't urgent) in circumstances when Council Meetings are suspended as a result of government advice / restrictions in relation to health or other emergency situations.

I have drafted a proposed new Standing Order 8A:

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It is suggested that the above allows for continuation of the general day-to-day business, but doesn't allow for new council functions, save for anything arising directly out of the crisis that precipitated the suspension of meetings, which clearly isn't the general day-to-day. The idea to carry on existing business as usual as far as possible, but not to bring through any controversial matters.

SOs and FRs already make provision for the RFO to make necessary payments between meetings, which appears to be satisfactory for the ongoing business of Council. Orders to Pay will be circulated on a monthly basis and any queries can be raised as they come up. The Orders to Pay since the last meeting will then be ratified and noted at the next meeting, whenever that may be.

I note that I have started to receive calls from concerned residents about services to assist them during isolation / quarantine and offers or volunteer help.

I have updated the website with key information and I am liaising with the Chiddingfold Good Neighbours, St. Mary's and the Surgery to understand what support is available locally. The GNS have offered to coordinate volunteer support locally and I am seeking to provide general support to this where possible on behalf of the council.

WBC are directing volunteers and people looking for support to Voluntary Action South West Surrey.

I have suspended public opening of the Parish Office, but continue to work at home and at the office as required.

Lauren

Lauren Blatherwick
Clerk to Chiddingfold Parish Council

COVID-19 (Corona) Virus

The national situation has moved from the containment to delay phase. Current public health advice is as follows (summary taken from Waverley Borough Council website):

If you live alone and have symptoms of the virus (either a high temperature and / or a new, persistent cough) you should stay at home and self-isolate for seven days.

If you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. This will help to protect others in your community while you are infectious.

If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days. If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact NHS 111 to tell them you're staying at home. People who are self-isolating with mild symptoms will not be tested. Read more about the stay at home guidance.

Always carry tissues with you and use them to catch your cough or sneeze. Then bin the tissue, and wash your hands, or use a sanitiser gel. Remember: Catch it, Bin it, Kill it.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using public transport, when you get in from work or blow your nose, sneeze or cough. Wash your hands before you eat or handle food. Use a sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.

Avoid touching your face, especially if you haven't washed your hands.

As advice is changing regularly you are directed to the following resources for the latest published information and advice:

Government Public Health England – for information on symptoms, social distancing, self-isolation etc

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

with further specific guidance here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

NHS.UK – for information on how to reduce your risks of catching the virus, symptoms and treatment

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

LOCAL SUPPORT

For those needing support or assistance as a result of social distancing and isolation requirements there are locally based volunteers who may be able to assist.

The Chiddingfold Good Neighbours Scheme (GNS) is an established scheme with a contact for every part of the Parish and the group are coordinating local offers of support and requests for assistance. It is hoped that GNS will serve as a local information hub: connecting volunteers with those needing assistance and providing local information, including details on shops and services that can offer home delivery.

Other local groups are encouraged to liaise with GNS in relation to the supports they are offering and individuals are encouraged to contact GNS with any offers of support they care able to make.

You can get in touch with your local Good Neighbour directly or through the GNS Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Chiddingfold-Good-Neighbours-102301427811905/>

Alternatively, GNS can be reached by email on gns.chiddingfold@gmail.com

Or by phone on:

Helen (Secretary) 01428 681438 or 07921457856

Sue (Chair) 01428 681467 or 07538819284

Please take care that you remain careful about giving out personal information and in relation to your online security. There have been a number of online frauds connected to the Corona virus. The usual advice in relation to unsolicited email and phone calls should still be applied.

2020.03.17