

Girton Parish Council

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The Pavilion
Girton Recreation Ground
Cambridge Road, Girton
Cambridge CB3 0FH

Minutes of the meeting of Girton Parish Council held via video conference on Tuesday 15th September, 2020, at 7.00 p.m.

Residents were invited to submit written statements on issues of concern to any Councillor or the Clerk for presentation at item 20/97.1, with video-conference details for the public open session available on request from the Clerk.

Present: (Cllrs) Williams (Chairman), Buckler, Cockley, Dashwood, de Lacey, Hickman (until end of item 20/100), Kettle, Mitchell.

Cllr L Harford (Cambs County Council), Cllr T Bygott (South Cambs District Council)

In attendance: S Cumming (Clerk)

20/94 Welcome from the Chairman. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

20/95 Apologies and Reasons for Absence. Apologies had been received from Cllrs Godby, Griffin, Rodger and Thorrold, and Cllr Hickman apologised that he would have to leave the meeting early. Apologies had also been received from the Assistant to the Clerk and Chair of Girton Town Charity Trustees.

20/96 Members' declarations for items on the agenda. None.

20/97 Public Participation session on agenda items and matters of mutual interest:

1. Members of the Public. Written representations to be verbally presented by Councillors. There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

2. County Councillor's Report. Cllr Harford spoke of the Active Travel Funds. Girton's involvement in the cursory consultation on cycle lanes has caused disappointment. Within the funding we currently have we should look at a revised scheme, and Cllr Harford will be pursuing this straightaway. The Chairman expressed thanks for the road resurfacing, and queried if there is any information on the road traffic incidents at Girton Corner. It is reported that an unidentified white/silver van caused the initial damage to the fence – where residents were woken at 2.30am. In a second incident, a motorcyclist was involved at the same point and was taken to hospital. The road crossing changes at Girton Corner are a distinct improvement but calls to further improve pedestrian access from both sides of Girton Road are unlikely to be easily achieved. The Eddington and Girton Safety Group are asking about the junction at Thornton Road, currently a safety hazard because of parking. Cllr Harford will look at the Traffic Restriction Order and see how much time they have to carry out their works. In reference to the business case for installation of solar panels the Chairman asked how feasible it is currently to store solar energy as this

would be essential for viability of an installation at the Pavilion. Cllr Bygott said several companies could help with this. The Chairman thanked Cllr Harford for her report.

3. District Councillors' Reports (*Appendix A*). Cllr de Lacey reported that a communications tower is to be put at the back of the BT station on Huntingdon Road, which will go significantly above the trees there. The Chairman thanked Cllr de Lacey for his explanation of the government's proposed changes in planning rules. Cllr Bygott spoke about how the five year land supply is being discussed at District Council level. The Few's Lane Consortium appeal has been rejected. Cllr Bygott has been researching the 'Planning for the Future' consultation and Prof R Scruton's 'Building Better, Building Beauty' and would like a minimum size of land on which people can build.

4. Police Report. There was no report this month.

20/98 To confirm the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18th August, 2020

(previously circulated). The Chairman proposed that the wording of item 20/84.5 be amended to read 'attendance *records*', and that the phrase reads 'Temperature measurement will be a strong recommendation' be added. With these amendments, the Minutes were proposed as a true record of the meeting by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Cockley and approved with one abstention.

20/99 To confirm the Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 25th August, 2020

(previously circulated). Cllr de Lacey queried the loss of two years' VAT claims and it was explained that this was due to frequent changes of Finance Officer during 2015-17 and has been reported on numerous occasions previously. The Minutes were proposed as a true record of the meeting by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Cockley and approved with three abstentions.

20/100 Matters arising from the Minutes (for information only)

20/93 The Annual Governance and Accounting Return for 2019-20 has been approved by the internal auditor and forwarded to the external auditors.

Following the government's announcement of the 'rule of six', the implications for use of Parish facilities was discussed. It was believed that outdoor activities would not be affected and that indoors groups of six are allowed provided they do not intermingle. Cllr Hickford left the meeting at this point.

20/101 Business items requiring a decision, or consideration by the Council.

1. To approve: that Girton Parish Council register for payment and collection of VAT. An alternative could be to establish a Management Committee. The Chairman explained that the latter approach was open to challenge and he would prefer not to rush into this. The Chairman proposed that our accountant registers for VAT, seconded by Cllr Buckler. It was suggested that no business case has been presented for this, and it was queried what the effect would be on hirers. The chairman explained that we will have to absorb 20% of our current fees and pay as VAT. However the amount we pay will be far less than what we can reclaim on building works. The chairman undertook to investigate further the ways in which other PCs handled this matter to ensure we adopt the correct approach. Approved with one vote against.
2. To approve transfer of archived parish files from the Pavilion Loft to the County Archive and transfer of computers to staff homes for the duration of the building works. Proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Mitchell. Cllr Cockley suggested we look for an alternative office

and will investigate this. There are archives kept in the back room which are the property of other groups who will be approached to remove them. It was questioned whether the computers are run off a server so making it impossible to operate separately. This is not the case however as they are separate machines operating in a network. Cllr Mitchell suggested that a protocol is needed on keeping/archiving materials. Approved unanimously.

3. To approve amendments to the AGAR submission. The Council will wait until the external auditors make amendments and will then reallocate.
4. To approve purchase and installation of a replacement Log Lift on 10 Acre Field. The Chairman had circulated installation costs, the recent play inspection having suggested that the item be replaced as it doesn't comply with current regulations. The Chairman has made a site visit with the installer. The Chairman proposed the purchase and installation of equipment, seconded by Cllr Cockley. Cllr de Lacey suggested that three quotations be sought from outside the area to see if a cheaper quotation is available, and proposed an amendment that two other quotations be sought, seconded by Cllr Cockley. The amended motion was approved with two abstentions.
5. To appoint a contractor for Pavilion cleaning until 31st August, 2021. As cleaning requirement may vary throughout the Covid crisis, this decision could be made by the Clerk, Chairman and one other Councillor.
6. To approve the removal of trees at Weavers Field. Proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Buckler. These two trees are subject to complaints from a neighbour regarding their extreme height and leaf-fall on his property and are on Parish Council land. As several trees have been lost from the original planting schedule at Weavers Field it was suggested that these two trees be replaced, to be brought to a future meeting.
7. To approve a contractor to crown lift trees at Mayfield. (details circulated). The cheapest quotation received was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Cockley and approved unanimously.
8. To approve a contractor for installation of bollards at the Pavilion car park. (Details to be circulated). The Chairman and Cllr Buckler have looked at suitable galvanised steel bollards to match the fence, the idea of flower planters proving to be not workable. Only one, high priced, quotation has yet been received for fitting the bollards so this item could not be taken further.
9. To agree a response to the public consultation on the North East Cambridge Area action plan. Cllr Bygott is on the joint local planning group looking at development around Cambridge North Station. Proposed development is very high density. The Council does not have a response.

20/102 Finance and Resource Management

1. To approve the payments schedule for the past month (to be circulated). Proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Cockley, and approved with two abstentions.
2. To note any significant variance from usual levels of monthly income/expenditure. None.

20/103 Correspondence (to be received) None.

20/104 To receive reports

1. Chairman's Report (*Appendix B*) The Chairman reported that the Pavilion extension planning application had been submitted on 14th September.

Following resurfacing of Cambridge/Girton Roads, the cycle lanes are not to be reinstated, but roundels will be used. The Council were sorry to hear of Mr G Thorpe's ill health, and Cllr Cockley agreed to circulate a card for him to be signed by Councillors and staff.

2. Girton Town Charity Report. No report this month. Apologies had been received from the Chair of Trustees.

20/105 Items which the Council need to discuss at future meetings.

Performance reviews and job roles for current staff will be undertaken shortly.

The meeting closed at 8.23pm

APPENDIX A

District Councillor's Report from Cllr Douglas de Lacey

A lot of remote meetings this month but not of much relevance to us.

I had a useful meeting with Anthony Browne, our MP, and found him sympathetic to my concerns. Among other things we discussed climate change, the future of local councils, and planning. I noted wryly that there are billions of pounds investment to be found in covid-19 but little in climate change, and he wryly acknowledged that governments are not good at long-term issues, but he is doing what he can. He agrees that the current 5 layers of local government (Parish, District, County, Greater Cambridge and Combined Authority) don't make sense but doesn't see immediate change. He thinks the planning White Paper will be implemented within the lifetime of this parliament but it will not change much immediately. It was good to have direct contact with him.

I have now studied the White Paper. Two repeated themes are striking: one a focus on beauty and the other the importance of using digital technology (including the odd claim that the new system will be 'based on data, rather than documents' p25). Two notable absentees are any reference to the problem of land-banking, and the issue of developer profits. Developers are able to build into their projected costs a profit of (I think) 20%, supposedly to account for their risk. This is then taken into account when assessing, for instance, the amount of community facility and affordable housing which can be imposed by the local authority. It is claimed that the new system will reduce risk but no suggestion that this should affect developer profits. The paper is full of aspiration, much of it excellent, but so free of detail that assessment is not easy. One proposal which may prove particularly problematic is that Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy would be replaced by a single levy, 'a fixed proportion of the development value above a threshold' which would be set centrally. The great advantage of S106 is that it reacts to local issues, such as the huge expense of dealing with contaminated land. This alternative could turn out to be very expensive to Councils. Another is the proposed expansion of permitted development

rights; we have already seen abuse of such rights in our area. Details of the White Paper and the consultation can be found at www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future (or tinyurl.com/y5d4jw8v).

Cabinet on 2 Sept looked at the first quarter's performance. Inevitably the effects of the pandemic were seen, sometimes starkly, in some areas (eg business rate income and B&B costs for housing the homeless) but most remarkable to my mind was my own bête noir -- our Contact Centre. Its performance has improved remarkably over the past three months and I am now promised what I have been asking for over several years: details including standard deviations which may enable us to assess where the real problems are. But perhaps home-working has already solved them?

We are gradually opening the Cambourne SCDC Hall to officers who wish to return though many are working happily and productively from home. We shall also be open to residents who need to visit in person, though only at present by appointment bookable from our www.scams.gov.uk website.

Douglas de Lacey

APPENDIX B

Chairman's Report 9th September 2020

Following the AGAR approval at an Extraordinary meeting in August the Internal audit was completed and the documents submitted to external auditors in early September. The return is also posted on the Parish Website. Some misallocations were noted and are being corrected for approval at next week's meeting. However they do not make a material difference to the financial status of the accounts.

Matters are being progressed to submit our planning application for the Pavilion extension and we hope to complete this by the end of this week. Contact was made with a senior member of the Planning Department to explain the urgency of the application and undertakings have been made to allocate the project to an appropriate Officer with the time to give it immediate attention.

All will be aware of the successful relaying of the road surface from Wellbrook Way to New Road. Our thanks to County Councillor Lynda Harford for her help in getting this work completed. The speed humps have yet to be replaced but we are assured this will happen when the new 20mph zone is installed. Lynda is chasing for a date for this to be completed. The temporary cycle lanes will be unlikely to be re-instated and will be replaced with the 20mph roundels. This was explained to Lynda and me when we met with a Highways Officer in August. The logic of this decision is far from clear as it seems the only thing that has changed since their original installation is government policy!

Gill, Mary, Susie and Laura have been very busy this month in developing risk assessments and protocols for the reopening of Pavilion facilities. I am sure all will join me in thanking them for their efforts to complete this formidable task.

This month I joined Girton Green Team to remove branches from trees and shrubs overhanging gardens in Weavers Field. Two trees have grown to a great height and need to be removed so we shall approve this course of action at our September meeting. Attempts to diagnose the problem with the play area see saw have been unsuccessful. The suppliers charge £200 + for call out and a similar figure for return to repair so we need to resolve this so that repair can be completed in one visit.

Discussions with the suppliers indicate that our Trim Trail Log Lift does not comply with latest safety regulations without modification,. Given its' age and state of disrepair a quotation for replacement is being obtained and will be brought to our meeting for approval.

The proposal to install planters along the footpath at the carpark was not agreed in August so we have identified suitable bollards which will be approved or not at the September meeting.

Regrettably minor acts of vandalism continue. Following damage to a set of football goalposts earlier in the summer, our new gel dispenser at the Pavilion play area was first of all damaged and following repair was then dumped in the waste bin. I also recently had cause to remonstrate with children who were climbing on a cricket cover putting it in serious danger of collapse.

Haydn Williams