

**Minutes of a meeting of Sunninghill & Ascot Parish Council  
held via Zoom  
on Tuesday 03 November 2020 at 7.00pm.**

Members present: Councillors A Sharpe (Chairman), B Story (Vice-Chairman), P Carter, L Davison, P Deason, R Ellison, M Finch, B Hilton, S Humphrey, C Lester, C Richardson, R Wood.  
In attendance: RBWM Councillor D Hilton; Catalina Estrada (Imperial College); Helen Goodwin, Clerk to the Council.

**7730 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies received from Councillors S Herring and J Gripton and S Verma. Cllr S Jones was absent.

**7731 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman asked to receive any Declarations of Interest in accordance with the adopted Code of Conduct. None were received.

**7732 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22 September 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed as such.

**7733 FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- (i) The Chairman recently attended a meeting with Network Rail regarding their proposed vegetation clearance works, in particular the works along the line at Sunninghill. The meeting was very helpful and constructive and was attended by an officer from the Tree Council. Every tree in the cutting at Sunninghill has been taken into account; some trees will have to be lost to vegetation clearance but biodiversity is being addressed as advised by the Tree Council and some trees will be treated and vegetation maintained including log piles. The representative of the Tree Council agreed that the Parish Council may apply to them for funding and they will be very happy to work with us on any project within the parish, especially if it relates to hedging. They will also be happy to talk to us about nesting boxes etc anywhere in our parish.
- (ii) This Sunday is Remembrance Sunday but, due to current Covid restrictions, the service is to be filmed ahead of time and livestreamed on Sunday. The Chairman will be attending and laying a wreath on behalf of the Parish Council, as is customary. In addition, the Chairman will be attending the Warhorse memorial tomorrow where there is a new art installation of purple poppies.
- (iii) The vacancy for a Trustee for the Sunninghill Trust has been advertised.
- (iv) There has been a good uptake on our appeal for litter pickers. However, we need to check on whether this can go ahead with the new Covid restrictions coming into force later this week.
- (v) We have been informed by RBWM that we will not be receiving the equalisation grant for next year.
- (vi) The BLP inspector is hosting some hearings on line. We have sent in our written comments and councillors are invited to listen into the hearings which are to be livestreamed.

**7734 PUBLIC ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was not adjourned.

**7735 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY**

Cllr A Sharpe reported that we have been trying to engage with RBWM to understand their position on what CIL should be spent on in our parish with the idea that we could use our own CIL funds on joint projects with the Borough Council. Cllr Wood has tried to engage on several occasions and Chris Joyce at RBWM was invited to this meeting. He was unable to attend but has indicated he will come to the next full council meeting in December. As a matter of note, Cllr Wood advised that, as of 30 September, we had £250,000 in CIL reserves available. This therefore means that RBWM, in relation to developments in our parish, must have received £825,000 by the same date.

#### **7736 GREEN CORRIDOR SURVEY PROJECT**

Cllr A Sharpe reminded the council that this is a project undertaken using a CIL funds with the idea of surveying our green corridors so that we have robust research under our belts and, should we need to defend any of our green corridors in terms of future development etc, we would know exactly where our baseline is and where we stand in terms of biodiversity in our area.

Catalina Estrada of Imperial College gave a presentation setting out the objectives of the project and the work carried out up to March 2020. She explained which areas they have been able to access and that they had been testing the water quality, surveying birds, mammals, butterflies and plants. A network of reptile mats was also set up. Catalina set out the findings of the surveys and explained that the species found in the winter were very similar to those found in spring and summer except for the winter visitors such as the Red Wing. They have started analysing the sightings from their surveys and compiling the information in maps to find which fall in the area of the Corridors and which of the species have protection status. The plan going forward is to continue the surveys with a particular focus on mammals, especially the Edible Dormouse, which is a species which has been in the UK for a long time but has extended its range and, should it be in our area, its impact will be studied. Further surveys with plants, reptiles and pollinators will continue, as well as water surveys, however, all work is dependent on Covid restrictions. In terms of the budget, so far approx. £3,000 has been spent.

It was noted that the planning application previously discussed for a film set at Cheapside covers an area which intersects with our green corridors and it was agreed that the Clerk would send details of the application and the Parish Council comments to Catalina for her consideration of any points which she feels we could add to our objections.

#### **7737 PRESENTATION OF COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Planning Committee Minutes of 06 October and 27 October were presented by Cllr R Wood. The attention of the Parish Council was drawn to the application for the film set at Cheapside, a very big set with a three month construction period, which will generate 150 cars plus vans when filming. This would have a very disruptive impact on the green belt and for those who enjoy walking along the footpath and up past the lake. We have submitted a strong objection.

#### **7738 FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Cllr R Wood presented the financial reports to 30 September 2020. He reported that expenditure is very much in line with the budget; income is in line with the exception of playing fees for tennis and football which are behind but not significantly at this stage. We have spent very little on capital projects so far; the major item we had expected to spend on was Cheapside playpark, which has been delayed and needs to be progressed. Cllr M Finch confirmed that he is currently working on the specification and hopes to send it to the Clerk for sending out to contractors in the very near future. It is hoped that the expenditure at Cheapside will still be in this financial year and major works at South Ascot will be in the next financial year when the new lease has been arranged.

There are currently increased reserves and they are enough to cover all eventualities as they stand. It was noted that the grants which were awarded in September did not show on the financial reports being presented because the cheques which were raised to send to the recipients of the grants did not go out until after 30 September. It was also noted that there had not been the expected spending at Tom Green's Field and Blythewood; this was due to the Covid restrictions in the late spring and summer but it is planned that these projects will start up again before the next nesting season. Further, the Racecourse contributed a smaller amount than usual towards the hanging baskets. This was because, under the circumstances at the time, the staff at the Racecourse had requested some of the money be given instead to the NHS instead. As the Parish Council considers the hanging baskets an important addition to the High Street, it was decided we would go ahead with the full number as ordered and absorb the cost ourselves. We advised the Racecourse we hoped they would return to the full amount of contribution next year.

Cllr R Wood advised that he will be working with the Clerk before the next full council meeting in December to put together a draft budget for 2021/22. He requested that anybody who has any input for the budget, especially the Leisure committee, to please let him know so that it can be included in the budget.

#### **7739 CLERKS' FORUM**

The parish clerks within RBWM recently held an online forum to which a councillor from each parish council was invited. The Clerk gave a brief report of the meeting, at which she and Cllr Wood were in attendance. She reported that there had

been discussion focussing on services which the parishes have power to deliver but RBWM currently delivers, and whether the parishes would wish to fund any services the borough may decide they can no longer afford; if so, whether they might wish to collaborate on funding these services. It was a difficult and theoretical discussion as it is not yet clear whether RBWM is ceasing services. The outcome of the meeting was that a presentation which had been prepared on the subject would be summarised and circulated. When the Clerk has received this it will be sent to all parish councillors. It was emphasised that this was an exploratory meeting only and not one at which any decisions would or could be made on behalf of parish councils.

The Clerk advised the council that the Clerks and Chairmen of the parish councils in the borough have been invited to a finance update to be chaired by Duncan Sharkey on 6<sup>th</sup> November and it is hoped that this will be helpful in informing the parishes of RBWM's future financial plans. It was agreed that the invitation would be forwarded to Cllr R Wood, as chairman of our Finance Committee. It was noted that if RBWM decides to cut a service we would need to know what the quantified effect would be before the beginning of January so that we could consider this for our budget; this is therefore difficult in terms of timing.

#### **7740 PLANNING MATTERS**

The Chairman reminded councillors that the Parish Council has previously given delegated responsibility to Cllrs R Wood and P Deason to send out responses on behalf of the Parish Council with regard to the government's white paper on planning and also the borough's planning consultation. The Chairman thanked them for the considerable amount of work they put into that and councillors were urged to read through the documents which have been submitted.

#### **7741 BOROUGH COUNCIL MATTERS**

A report was received from RBWM Cllr D Hilton regarding RBWM matters in which he explained how the year has been dominated by Covid. The exceptions being the publication of the Climate Strategy, a borough-wide guide and; an Asset Management Review & Action Plan which lists in entirety the borough council's assets.

Cllr Hilton reported that, along with the emergency services the borough council is a provider of last resort and in lockdown all attention was focussed on Covid, from morgue capacity to PPE for care homes; the council's attention was diverted from business as usual. The council immediately adopted a low-risk strategy which it still employs, with staff working from home and face-to-face meetings only where there is a specific need. Council meetings continue via Zoom and are livestreamed. Some staff living alone have returned to working in the Town Hall to combat loneliness.

The financial impact of Covid has been severe; in September Cllr Hilton reported a projected overspend of £11m on an £86m service budget (13%) as a result of increased cost and loss of income. It is expected that c. 70% lost income will be recovered from government which, along with some in-year savings, will help deliver a balanced budget. However, the gap in next year's budget has been calculated at £8.4m and this will need to be filled by reducing expenditure and/or increasing revenue; the 2021/22 budget is currently being worked on; the borough is obligated by law to produce a balanced budget. The Government hasn't yet published its Comprehensive Spending Review which will inform the level of funding the borough can expect to receive.

One change that affects the parishes is the establishment of the Borough-wide Development Panel, of which Cllr Hilton is one of the nine members. One of the changes that goes with this is that it is only applications for 10 or more dwellings that go to panel. It is still possible to call-in an application, however the rules around it have changed significantly.

Cllr Hilton responded to questions from parish councillors:

- Regarding reduced parking charges for Advantage Card holders Cllr Hilton explained that there is a proposal to renew the scheme to be brought to Cabinet in November and the likely outcome is that payment will be made using a mobile phone app.
- The lack of tourists and other visitors to Windsor due to the pandemic has had a very detrimental effect on the retail businesses there and the government has been giving small businesses a business rate holiday and some other businesses have received grants towards rates. However, the borough expects the drop in parking revenue to continue into next year. In addition, the new leisure centre opened but will now have to be closed again due to the next lockdown. The various areas where there has been and will be no income are the root cause of the problem.

- Cllr M Finch thanked Cllr Hilton for all the hard work put in by those at RBWM over the period of the pandemic. Cllr Hilton was grateful for the comments and advised that over the past few months RBWM children's services have been rated as Good by Ofsted and the Youth Offending Team has also been rated as Good, which highlights the good work going on despite the difficulties of the pandemic.
- Cllr Hilton was asked when the Borough-wide Design Guide will it be adopted; he will make enquiries and advise the parish council.
- Asked whether the borough has received funding to look at the Ascot infrastructure, Cllr Hilton confirmed there had been an opportunity for some funding from the LEP to do a review of Ascot High Street (from Heatherwood to the B383) and preliminary work had been carried out. The parish council had not been consulted because this had all happened fairly quickly. He doesn't know at this stage how far this got and whether the funding will be obtained. When asked if the rumour was true that the application was accompanied by a proposal to remove parking from Ascot High Street and replace it with parking provided by the Racecourse, Cllr Hilton responded that he hasn't seen a report and no decisions have been made. He went on to advise that a different scheme had been suggested earlier in the year which would have used funds from Government and that would have involved widening the pavements along Ascot High Street at the expense of parking. He had spoken with every business/retailer who would be impacted by that, none of whom were in favour; the scheme has since been dropped.
- A question was asked as to whether the RBWM overspend this year was likely to affect rates next year. Cllr Hilton responded that business rates are set by Government so are not influenced by RBWM's finances.
- The expected timing of the Oaks Leisure Centre project was asked about. Cllr Hilton responded that there have been delays with significant development projects and the Oaks will not be built in this administration.
- When asked about the alternative SANG and lease in South Ascot Cllr Hilton said that he will have a conversation with Chris Joyce and see where we are. There has been a lot of detailed work on the ecology of the area re the SANG including what needs to be done to make the area suitable, but he hasn't seen the outcomes.
- With regard to CIL, Cllr Hilton advised that RBWM has a formal arrangement for determining CIL priorities; there is a board which he is on but it hasn't yet met. RBWM has nearly £6m in CIL funds and will need to think about what they will do with that. As it stands Maidenhead is zero CIL rated – an arrangement made in order to promote the regeneration of Maidenhead. For council based developments this arrangement doesn't affect overall income but for private developments it does so Cllr Hilton is hoping to be able to change this. When asked if the borough would provide guidelines for parish councils to guide them on CIL funding, Cllr Hilton responded that he thinks it is essential for RBWM to give assistance with big projects and he can see some as being joint funded.
- Cllr Hilton commented that he thinks the Parish Council Green Corridor Project is a very good one and he is pleased to see it still going ahead. He has had a conversation with Victoria Gibson of RBWM regarding the application for the film set at Cheapside previously discussed, but asked the Clerk to provide him with a copy of the application so that he can follow this up.
- A question was asked regarding the library consultation that has been taking place and what the response to this has been. Cllr Hilton will look into this and report back.
- The subject of the problems regarding bin collections was raised and discussed. Cllr Hilton agreed that this has been a most frustrating episode. The amount of waste and recycling increased by 20% this year and the contractors didn't have the capacity to deal with this. However, from this week a new Saturday collection has been introduced and this should take the pressure off the Tuesday collections which should improve the service. He apologised for the poor service and reminded councillors that missed collections should be reported, either via the RBWM website, or by emailing one of the local borough councillors.

#### **7742 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- (i) Councillor M Finch thanked the Parish Council for mentioning on social media the music concert which was livestreamed from All Souls church last Saturday. This was very successful and over 200 people tuned in.
- (ii) Councillor C Lester raised the issue of some shoppers not complying with the face mask rule. She was advised that this is an issue for Trading Standards and that members of the public should contact them should they be concerned that shops are not enforcing the rule.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:42.

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Cllr A Sharpe, Chairman