

Downley Parish Council
Minutes of the Council held online, via Zoom
on Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors M Lazenby, (Chairman presiding), R Bowden, K Chandarana, A Lenard, S Monroe-West, V Naik, V Srao, S Steneskog, and S Tozer

In Attendance: Buckinghamshire Councillors W Mallen and P Turner and 5 Members of the Public.

Officer: M Kennedy (Locum Clerk)

1) Apologies for Absence (8183/11/20)

None.

2) Resignation of Parish Councillors and Co-option Arrangements (8184/11/20)

The resignation of Councillors C Burslem and D Egmore were reported to Council. Members discussed the arrangements for filling these vacancies by co-option.

3) Point of Order (8185/11/20)

Councillor R Bowden raised a point of order on the actual number of Councillors appointed to serve on the Council. He understood that originally there had been 2 elected Councillors and 8 co-opted Councillors. However, following the resignation of 2 Councillors, the Council advertised for and invited 3 Councillors onto the Council. Members sought clarification on whether there are 10 or 11 Councillors appointed to the Council.

The Chairman confirmed that the maximum number of Councillors appointed to serve on Downley Parish Council is eleven. Councillor Srao expressed the opposite view recalling that members of the public had applied to join the Council but had been advised that all vacancies had been filled and that for the last 3 years there had been 10 Councillors and now it seemed there are 11.

Clerk's Note: The Buckinghamshire Council's Elections Officer has confirmed in writing that the full quota of Councillors on Downley Parish Council is 11.

4) Arrangements for filling the Vacancies (8186/11/20)

The Clerk outlined the arrangements for filling the 2 vacancies. Council was informed that since the Parish Elections take place in May 2021, in less than 6 months' time, no by-election can be called. Either the vacancies can be filled by co-option or left open until May 2021. Councillor V Srao moved a motion that the vacancies be now advertised. The motion was declared lost by 5 votes to 1, whereupon it was **RESOLVED** that the question of filling the vacancies be deferred to the next meeting of the Council and that the Clerk presents a full report including arrangements for the co-option process.

5) Declarations of Interest (8187/11/20)

None

6) Minutes (8188/11/20)

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Council held on 8 September 2020, 13 October 2020 and the Extraordinary meeting held on 27 October 2020 were presented for adoption. Councillor Bowden outlined numerous inaccuracies in the minutes of the 13 October with particular regard to the former clerk and her employment status. He considered that the minutes should be withdrawn and completely re-written to accurately reflect what he had said. Councillor Monroe-West supported the views expressed by Cllr Bowden and reminded Council had minutes are a legal document and can be presented in court. Councillor Steneskog endorsed the remarks and proposed that the minutes be withdrawn and not approved. It was **RESOLVED**

- (i) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2020, be received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record save to the following extent : delete Cllr Fryberg from the list of Councillors in attendance (Min. No. 8141/09/20);
- (ii) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 be withdrawn and that the Locum Clerk transcribes the minutes from the audio record of the meeting for re-presentation to the next meeting of the Council; and
- (iii) that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 27 October 2020, be received, approved, and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

7) Public Participation (8189/11/20)

Mr. E Crendon of Mines Close addressed the Council on the safety issues for residents of Mines Close with pavement parking and hazardous vehicular movements crossing the central reservations, the poor vision splay egressing into Polmer Green Lane and vehicular speeds. He urged the Council to reconsider representations to the Community Board for the implementation of signing and lining in Mines Close restricting parking.

Mr. D Olufemi also of Mines Close explained that the issue has been on-going for many years and that representations had been made to the MP and to Cllr Mallen. The constant parking of vehicles wholly or partially on the pavement forces residents into the road. Parked vehicles also create a bottleneck restricting access to Mines Close for emergency and service vehicles. Double yellow lines would ameliorate the situation.

Alwen Mann added her own experiences of the problems encountered by wheelchair users safely negotiating the pavements around parked cars and wondered whether Traffic Wardens and or the Police could ticket the area. However, it was recognised that enforcement would be an issue

8) Variation to the Order of Business (8190/11/20)

It was **RESOLVED** that the order of business be varied to enable Agenda Item 10, Junction Markings, to be considered given the public attendance at the meeting.

9) Junction Markings (8191/11/20)

Buckinghamshire Councillor Mallen explained that emails and photographs of the issues surrounding Mines Close had been presented to Downley Parish Council. The

Community Board understood the Council supports the lining proposals but was unwilling to part fund the scheme. However, without parish council support the matter cannot be progressed. The Chairman said that the matter had indeed been considered by the Council at a virtual meeting but that without further information from Councillor Mallen, who was unable to join the meeting, the scheme could not be supported.

The Chairman confirmed that the Council is now represented at meetings of the Community Board. With the benefit of all the facts, Members recognised the importance of this scheme which deserves the Council's support. Since the overall bid for line marking has not yet been submitted by the Community Board, the Council has an opportunity to resubmit its bid to include the Mines Close scheme.

Buckinghamshire Councillor Turner interceded and explained that the Board's secretary, Jackie Binning, had agreed to defer placing the order pending the Council's decision this evening.

Councillor Monroe-West expressed concern that progression of this scheme ahead of others could be adversely regarded if there were more pressing traffic calming measures demanding the Council's attention. Following a lengthy debater, it was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the extent of the Council's matched funding for junction markings be increased from £2,507.64, the amount previously agreed for the list of bids for Downley, to £3,078.85 to include a further contribution of £571.21 for junction marking at Mines Close.

10) Reports from Buckinghamshire Councillors (8192/11/20)

Members had before them, copy having been previously issued, a report from Councillor Turner with updates on Covid-19, consultations, highway maintenance issues and planning. He also recorded thanks to the outgoing parish Councillors and the former clerk and welcomed the new locum clerk to Downley.

Councillor Mallen updated the Council on the Buckinghamshire Council's waste services, the costs per household, the percentage of waste sent to landfill and current recycling levels. She extended an invitation to the Council to visit the Visitors Centre at Greatmoor where they produce renewable energy.

A question was put to Councillor Mallen as to why she had abstained on the vote for the Downley Crossing. In response, Councillor Mallen said she was not opposed to the crossing but indicated her concerns that sometimes young people perceive a pedestrian crossing as a safe refuge and fail to take due care and attention when crossing the road. It was **RESOLVED** that the reports to be received and noted coupled with a request that Buckinghamshire Councillors present written reports ahead of the meetings in future.

11) Appointment of Interim Clerk (8193/11/20)

The Chairman formally welcomed Mike Kennedy to the Council as the Locum Clerk. Due diligence had been followed in the appointment including examination of his CV and references from his previous two appointments at the Ivers Parish Council and

Batchworth Community Council. It was **RESOLVED** that M Kennedy be appointed as the Council's Locum Clerk for a minimum of 20 hours per week, his actual hours to be billed at the rate of £25 per hour as the workload demands, the position to be reviewed in January 2021

12) Website and IT Support (8194/11/20)

The Chairman had circulated a written proposal for website support, improving navigation and content prepared by Ann Warne who had previously built the Council's website. A view was expressed that the Council should prepare a contract specification document and expose this to competitive quotations. Councillor Bowden questioned what the Council was seeking to achieve. As regards the software maintenance updates, he advised the Council that he undertakes this task every 2 weeks. He felt the Council could perform all the tasks themselves without recourse to external support.

An alternative view was expressed that the Council needs to overhaul the website because it is not compliant with the new Website Accessibility Regulations. Moreover, the Council needs to gain control of our social media and communications avenues. Notwithstanding Council's appointment of Councillor Bowden as webmaster, certain Councillors believed that control of the website should fall to the clerk.

The Council was informed that the clerk possessed full log-in details for the website, these had been issued to her by Councillor Bowden. Passwords had been changed on the day the former clerk had resigned in accordance with protocol. Council agreed it would be prudent to have a back-up person and, in this regard, Councillor Naik offered his services. Following further debate, it was **RESOLVED** that the access to the Council's website be afforded to the Clerk.

13) Appointment of Councillors to fill vacancies on Committees (8195/11/20)

Following a lengthy debate, it was **RESOLVED** that

- (i) the membership of the Finance Committee for the remainder of the local government year shall be:
Councillors Bowden, Monroe-West, Steneskog and Tozer,
- (ii) the membership of the Planning Committee for the remainder of the local government year shall be:
Councillors Lazenby, Lenard, Naik and Srao

Clerk's note: Council adjourned at 9.15pm to allow the Finance and Planning Committees to convene for the purposes of appointing a Chairman. The meeting reconvened at 9.18pm

14) Policy Review (8196/11/20)

Councillor Srao had requested Council's consideration of this matter. He proposed the Council updates all current policies and Standing Orders and that the Clerk re-issues all current governance documents to all Councillors. He believed the recently issued Grievance Procedure document had not been adopted by Council.

The Clerk indicated that many policies are available from the County Associations and following further discussion it was **RESOLVED** that

- (i) the Clerk re-issues all existing policies to all Councillors;
- (ii) that a copy of the latest edition of the *Good Councillors Guide* be re-issued to all Councillors; and
- (iii) the Clerk examines all current and new policies and presents these to Council for consideration and adoption along with Revised Standing Orders and Grievance Procedures.

15) Street Light Project (8197/11/20)

Councillor Bowden apprised the Council of the latest position on this project. He expressed disappointment that the scheme had still to be uploaded onto the Government's Contract Finder website. Although the Locum Clerk had now registered the Council as a buyer on Contract Finder, he did not expect implementation before the Spring. Meanwhile, Councillor Bowden explained there were approximately 13 lamps that were out throughout the village and sought Council's approval for these to be replaced on grounds of urgency. It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that the Council approves expenditure of up to £3,500 for the urgent replacement of approximately 13 lamps with new LED bulbs in the current financial year, these lamps to be removed from the final contract to be placed on Contract Finder.

Arising from the foregoing, attention was drawn to a light in Narrow Lane. Council had agreed in 2018 to install a new light in Narrow Lane to provide illumination for the top (North) part of Narrow Lane, a scheme that remains outstanding. Although the column was installed in December 2019, the Local Area Technician stated that he was not in agreement with the position of the light. (There is no other suitable position for this as it had to be more than 1m back from the kerb for safety reasons.) Also, SSE stated that they would not connect this light to the nearest point without full payment of the costs.

All costs appeared to have been paid, but no further work has taken place. The previous clerk had not progressed this scheme which remains in abeyance. It was **RESOLVED** that the Locum Clerk be instructed to progress this long outstanding scheme.

Councillor Lenard left the meeting at 9.42pm

16) Personnel Committee (8198/11/20)

Councillor Bowden introduced this item and sought the Council's approval for the appointment a Personnel/ HR or Staffing Committee with membership of 2-3 Councillors. He stated that having researched this matter, the Hampshire Association of Local Councils states that employment decision can be delegated to a committee and that no one Councillor, not even the Chairman, can assume this responsibility. He advocated 5 matters that could be devolved to the committee: responsibility for assessing terms and conditions of employment; consideration of salary and incremental reviews; Annual performance reviews, hearing Complaints (both ways); and developing a Resilience Plan.

The Clerk explained the role and responsibilities of an HR committee and the powers that the Council may choose to delegate to it in terms of the recruitment process and dealing with all staff related issues. Following a lengthy debate it was **RESOLVED** that the matter be deferred to the next meeting and that Councillor Bowden submits his proposals for Council's further consideration.

17) Planning Applications (8199/11/20)

Members had before them details of those planning applications registered by Buckinghamshire Council, as set out on the agenda, together with the recommended comments for each application. It was **RESOLVED** that the recommended comments be registered on-line through the planning portal.

18) Decision Notices (8200/11/20)

The Council noted the decision notices submitted by the Buckinghamshire Council as set out on the agenda.

19) Payment of Invoices (8201/11/20)

The Council received and approved the schedule of payments, copy having been previously issued.

20) Correspondence (8202/11/20)

The clerk sought guidance on the distribution of correspondence. Councillors endorsed the Clerk's initiative in the distribution of a weekly newsletter but asked that all communications relating to Covid-19 be circulated as soon as possible. Arising from the foregoing it was proposed by Councillor Bowden, seconded by Councillor Chandarana and **RESOLVED** that the Clerk be authorised to purchase an office mobile telephone up to the value of £150

21) Date and Place of next meeting (8203/11/20)

It was agreed that the next ordinary meeting of Council shall be held by zoom on Tuesday 15 December at 7pm

22) Date and Place of next meeting of Committees (8204/11/20)

Finance Committee to be agreed.

23) Closure of the Meeting (8205/10/20)

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.09pm and thanked everyone for attending.

Chairman _____

Date _____