

Shimpling Parish Council
Minutes of Meeting of the Council
Monday 25th January 2021, 7:30pm via ZOOM remote conference.

Present:

Councillors: Liz Brunwin (Chair), Katie Haselhurst, Mike Atkins, Colin Johnston, Gerry Shrimpton, Nathalie Brown

County Councillor: Richard Kemp

District Councillor: Cllr Stephen Plumb

Clerk: Natasha Byford

Volunteer Assistant Clerk: Stuart Palmer

1. **Apologies for absence:** Ken Rush sent apologies and this was accepted. Cllr Michael Holt sent his apologies.
2. **Declarations of Members Interest(s):**
 - a) **To receive disclosure of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest(s) including gifts of hospitality in excess of £25:** None made
 - b) **To consider requests for dispensation for the agenda item(s) under discussion:** Chair Liz Brunwin, Cllr Mike Atkins and Cllr Katie Haselhurst all declared that they lived on The Street, very close to The Bush, item 7 on the agenda. Members resolved for the disclosures to be accepted but for those members to remain and take part in the meeting as, in this small village it would be impractical if members were excluded from debate simply by being a near neighbour.

Public Participation session

Six members of the public (MOP) attended. Nothing was raised at this point.

3. **Approval of minutes of the previous meeting:**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 11th January 2021 were approved. However, later in the meeting it was then discussed and decided that the wording of item 19 The Bush in those minutes should be changed in light of the letter sent to the Parish Council from the owner of The Bush. The approved new wording to be as follows:- 'The community right to bid does not give a right of first refusal to community groups to buy a listed asset. And at the end of the moratorium period, the owner can sell the asset for whatever price they wish to whoever they want. What being registered as an Asset of Community Value does, however, is to provide a window of time for community groups to pull together the funding necessary to bid to buy the asset on the open market.' The PC thanked the owner of The Bush for drawing this to the PCs attention and it was agreed to publish the above statement on Shimpling Community Facebook and the Village Round Robin. The owner of The Bush had asked for an apology for this misunderstanding but it was felt that as these were draft minutes, this was not necessary.

Action – Clerk to amend the draft minutes of the 11th January 2021 and republish on the website, Shimpling PC Facebook page and Shimpling PC Twitter page for approval at the next PC meeting.

Action – Chair to rectify this on Shimpling Facebook page and Village Round Robin.

4. Finance:

To acknowledge payments made outside the meeting

- **Lark Valley Willow grass cutting £442.80**
(Open Spaces Act 1906 ss 9-10)
- **Donation to Lawshall School for laptop/iPad from Covid fund £500**
(LGA 1972, s.137)

The above payments were approved by members.

It was acknowledged that we had received three grant donations totalling £6,447.43 to add to our Covid fund.

5. Footpath 7:

The Chair reminded the PC that in the previous meeting it was agreed that the PC had decided it would try and cover funding for the project from the central CIL fund. The PC had been offered £1,500 from the footpaths department and had agreed that £1,689 would be paid out of the PCs own CIL fund. The Chair stated the PC had had correspondence from a villager supporting the use of the Covid grant money to fund this project. The villager had also mentioned the footpath opposite the end of the Village Green also needed attention. She also stated that there were two issues which may mean that we would be unsuccessful with our application to fund the project from the central CIL fund – we required 3 quotes (we only had 2) and it was felt that we our bid would not be accepted as we would need to disclose the Covid grant funding that we had received.

One member noted that the grant payment receipts were addressed to the Village Hall Committee rather than the Parish Council. The Chair confirmed that the grant is for whoever pays the rates on the Village Hall, which was the Parish Council. It is Shimpling PC that is the business in receipt of the grant because they carry the liability of the Village Hall although it is the Village Hall Committee that run the Village Hall on the Parish Councils behalf. The Chair stated that the Village Hall Committee had benefited from the grant in their applications to it already.

The Chair reminded Councillors that they had drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding as a working party for the use of this grant and it was noted that the footpath project satisfied the requirements within this.

Since the PC have received the extra grants of £6,447.43, it was proposed that the PC would drop the application from the central CIL fund and use the PCs COVID grant fund to pay for the remaining requirement of £3,346 plus VAT instead. This was agreed.

Action: Cllr Johnson to assist Clerk in writing to winning bidder asking for confirmation that he will accept.

6. Footpath opposite The Bush:

£200 had been agreed at the last PC meeting for this project. The Chair had received a quote of £250 and asked to increase the budget for this by another £50 and have a budget of £250 for this work. This was agreed.

Action: Chair to allow the go ahead with this work.

7. The Bush:

At the last meeting the PC resolved to write a letter to the owner of The Bush, asking what his intentions were with the Pub now it has closed and offering the PCs support to help with the pub to reopen and extending an invitation to meet with him. The letter was hand delivered on the 12th January. Following delivery of that letter we received reports from several villagers concerned that the owner was converting the restaurant of the pub into flats. Members were advised to act on this as a matter of urgency. There was no planning application for this work on the planning website. The PC therefore contacted Babergh Planning Enforcement to advise them of the concerns.

On the 21st January, the owner of The Bush delivered letters to the Cllrs home addresses. In that letter, he asks that the PC apologise for their actions and the PC should not contact him unless we were going to remove The Bush as an Asset of Community Value. The PC felt that there was no reason to apologise for their actions and that it was not within their remit to remove the Asset of Community Value status as this was granted by Babergh District Council. They had been asked to consider applying for this by a resident of the village and had agreed to take this forward although it was Babergh's who made the final decision on this application and the owner could appeal this decision.

Councillors were keen to make contact with the owner of the Pub to try to work with him on the future of The Bush. They acknowledged that it was his property to do with he wished and sympathy was extended for the predicament that he must now be in now that he was not receiving income from the lease on the pub. However, it is members duty as a Parish Council to seek to make sure that all relevant permissions for development in the village are sought and obtained from the relevant authorities for any alterations to the Bush. These decisions are implemented and enforced by Babergh District Council and not the PC.

Cllr Stephen Plumb then gave an update, from Babergh's Planning Department. He stated that the owner of The Bush had been asked by Babergh Planning to produce some evidence of the work in the form of photographs. These had been supplied and were unacceptable and they have requested more detailed information. If they are still unhappy with the detailed proof sent by the owner, a planning contravention notice would be served. Babergh Officers are not currently able to make site visits. Cllr Plumb also mentioned that Babergh were investigating the residential status of the bed and breakfast accommodation.

8. Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the council

The Chair explained that she had received a request to ask the PC to write an official letter to Long Melford Doctors Surgery to thank them and their volunteers for the excellent job they were doing with the Covid vaccine roll out. This was unanimously agreed.

Action – Clerk to write and send a letter to Long Melford Surgery.

Public Participation

The Chair opened to the floor to MOPs again and nothing else was raised.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 8:25pm.