

## MOLLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on Tuesday 19 May 2020 using Zoom Video Conferencing  
**PRESENT:** Councillors Roger Jones (in the Chair), Sally Atkin, Brian Crowe, John Fielding and Christine Jones

In attendance: Mrs Pauline English (Parish Clerk), Cheshire West & Chester Ward Councillor Simon Eardley and one member of the public

### 20.31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Mike Jones and Angus MacSween  
Councillor Fielding declared an interest in issues relating to the Village Hall as he is a member of the Committee.

### 20.32 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

No issues raised

### 20.33 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2020 was confirmed as a correct record.

### 20.34 ITEMS TO BE DEFERRED TO A FUTURE MEETING

It was RESOLVED that the following items be deferred to the dates shown:

Item	Defer Until
Chairman and Vice-Chairman	May 2021
Annual Parish Meeting	May 2021
Representation on Outside Bodies	May 2021
Policies and Procedures	May 2021
Audit (see below)	July 2020

### 20.35 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

It was RESOLVED that

- (1) Decisions requiring urgent responses be delegated to the Parish Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and one other Councillor;
- (2) Following comparison with alternative providers, the Parish Council's insurance policy with Ecclesiastical be renewed from 1 June 2020 at a price of £168 + £50 administration, a total of £218, which is the same as last year;
- (3) Receipt of agenda and supporting documents by email be approved;
- (4) The appointment Bob Hadfield to build a new website for the Parish Council at a cost of £800 with ongoing hosting and support costs of £20 per month be confirmed.

### 20.36 FINANCIAL YEAR END

The Clerk reported on the financial year end, as follows:

- (1) **Internal Audit:** Having lost the services of Dotty about Accounts as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor, John Edwards (who is the internal auditor for Lea and Backford Parish Councils) had been approached and had agreed to take on Mollington as well. The SLCC had advised that, where possible, the internal audit should be completed by email, post, file sharing or teleconferencing rather than a physical audit and John had agreed that this could be achieved. Instructions were awaited from him.
- (2) **External Audit:** Due to the ongoing issues surrounding the coronavirus, advice regarding the completion of the external audit had been subject to frequent changes, but the overriding advice was that the audit process had been put back by two months with final completion currently being required by 30 November 2020. This may change if the lockdown was not lifted. Initially it had been advised that the Annual Governance Statement must be completed at a 'live' meeting but this advice had now been amended so that the AGAR forms could now be completed and approved at a virtual meeting and a copy signed by the Chairman and then sent to

the Clerk for signature before being uploaded onto the website. Further advice was awaited but this item was provisionally scheduled for the next meeting in July

## 20.37 UPDATE REPORTS

- (1) **Village Hall:** *Councillor John Fielding declared an interest in this item as he was a member of the Village Hall Committee.*

The length of the main hall had been reduced to cut costs and a revised quote of £939,105 had been received from the main contractors. This was still over budget and further savings of £90,424 had been identified leaving a construction/build cost of £848,681 which fell within the currently available budget of £852,115. Responses were currently awaited relating to funding of a further £50,000, an application was to be submitted to Severn Trent Water community projects programme for £55,000 and an application had been submitted to Sanctuary Housing for £1,000. This could provide an additional £106,000 towards the project which, if successful, would go towards reinstating the items removed to provide savings. Notification had been received from CWaC of a Non-Domestic Rate Remittance of £10,000, which was unexpected and very welcome. The Village Hall Trustees had decided that now was the time to proceed to contract stage and contract documents were currently being discussed. The current and possible future changes resulting from Covid-19 with regard to the operation of the existing hall were also being discussed, together with the new hall construction and future operation. Community fundraising ideas would continue to be explored. Councillor Crowe expressed concerns that costs might rise due to the scarcity of materials during the coronavirus pandemic. Councillor Roger Jones would confirm with Andrew Harkness the timetable for the drawdown of the Public Works Loan Board loan. It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

- (2) **Hyperfast B4RN Six Villages Project:** More than 100 voucher applications had now been received which was almost 45% of the amount needed to start building the project. Progress was being made with landowners generally, although there were three landowners who were making progress challenging, particularly within Mollington parish. If one of these landowners remained immovable, which was the most likely outcome, then to reach the centre of Mollington (Mollington Court and Well Lane), wayleaves would need to be negotiated with individual households to a far greater extent. The release of additional volunteer canvassers was currently being progressed, but a further acceleration of voucher applications over the next couple of weeks was anticipated. It was RESOLVED that the report was noted.

- (3) **Speed Limits:** An initial study held in October 2017 had recommended a 40mph Speed Limit along Grove Road from the school to Demage Lane, later extended to Wood Farm (riding stables). The scheme had not been implemented at the time. However, at the request of the Headteacher, on behalf of the school and local residents, discussions had been held with Kay Parry, the CWaC Principal Highways Engineer, who still supported the scheme for a 40mph speed limit. It had been confirmed that, unfortunately, the road did not meet the criteria for a 30mph limit. More than half of the households affected were in Lea-by-Backford and the Parish Council had discussed and supported seeking the 40mph speed limit. Implementation would cost £3,300 half of which (£1,650) would have to be borne by the community. Ward Councillor Simon Eardley had offered £500 from his Member's budget. A decision by the PTA to offer £500 was awaited and if this was approved it would leave £650 for the Parish Councils to fund equally. Councillor Fielding asked that his reservations about the benefits of such a scheme be noted. Discussions were ongoing. It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Lea-by-Backford Parish Council had asked if the proposals could be extended to cover the full length of Station Road. CWaC Highways had advised that this was not possible, and a fresh application would be needed. This matter was being taken up separately by Councillor Eardley.

**(4) Village Gateways:** Due to its geographical location Mollington village was used as a shortcut between the A41 and the A540, particularly at the beginning and end of the working day. Children were brought into and out of the village school by car daily. This meant that the level of traffic through the village at certain times of the day was abnormally high and brought with it the associated issue of speeding. There were four main routes into and out of Mollington. Signage was not a major issue. Road signs were generally in good condition and clearly visible except in two specific locations where some remediation work was required. The Parish Council had expressed an interest in using Village Gateways as a means of controlling speed. Those supplied by Glasdon had a minimum width of 960mm. The grass verge widths in Mollington varied from 500mm to 700mm which meant there was insufficient roadside space to accommodate these gateways. However, there was some space on the Village Green and on Townfield Lane to replace the "Mollington" signs. It was suggested that triangular road markings as a method of speed control might also be considered.

It was RESOLVED that no further action should be taken with regard to Village gateways but that CWaC should be approached to replace and/or reposition signs close to the junction with Overwood Lane on Townfield Lane, at the junction of Grove Road and Well Lane and at the junction of Grove Road and Townfield Lane.

**(5) Tree Survey:** Residents had expressed concern about the number of trees lost in Mollington on private land over the past few years. CWaC had been approached for their view on how the visual attractiveness of Mollington's treescape could be protected and maintained for all residents. They held the view that all trees on council land were protected automatically and property holders were generally good caretakers of trees so that specific new Tree Protection Orders would only be needed where there was the likelihood of harm taking place. Currently 13 areas of protected woodland and 20 individual protected trees had been identified within Mollington parish and one TPO-protected tree on the boundary with Lea-by-Backford. A preliminary survey of these trees had been made without access to private properties or contact with property owners given the ongoing special circumstances relating to Covid-19. Several other significant trees had been identified within private gardens or in hedgerows adjoining fields. The assumption that property owners could be relied upon to preserve legacy trees was no longer correct and the creation of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) was a lengthy, time-consuming process which was not always successful. As a first step towards the preservation of the treescape it was proposed to create a register of all noteworthy trees and engage property owners with the process of registering and demonstrating the amenity value of their trees. This register could be developed by enthusiastic amateurs over a period of time, say a year, but would require some input from arboreal specialists to give it the necessary authority.

It was RESOLVED that the Parish Council, in collaboration with volunteers and residents, should seek to create a one-page per tree register documenting position, species, approximate size and age, condition, "ownership" and willingness of property-owner to engage with tree preservation.

**(6) Covid-19:** During the lockdown the Parish Council was offering a pick-up service for food and prescriptions to residents who did not have friends or family available to do this for them. Take-up had been minimal as it appeared that Mollington residents were well served by friends and family. However, a regular service was being provided to two residents to pick up prescriptions and some shopping. It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**(7) Website:** Bob Hadfield was progressing with the construction of all three Parish Councils' websites and it was hoped that a preview would be available by the end of May. Travel restrictions during lockdown had prevented Bob from visiting Mollington to take photographs so he had used those that had been used for the Interpretive Panel. Christopher Jones had provided Bob with access to the "back end" of the

current site to enable all archive folders to be transferred. In the short term the front page of the Parish Website will focus on the Covid-19 pandemic with information for residents. It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## 20.38 PLANNING

(1) **Applications Received:** The following applications were considered:

Application No.	Application details	Deadline for response
20/00988/FUL	Erection of part two storey, part single storey side extension including front porch, side pergola and rear canopy, elevational changes and remodelling to house and garage, widening of existing vehicular access and construction of gates to entrance at Taquaral, Well Lane, Mollington, Chester, Cheshire CH1 6LD No objections submitted but observations were made that the proposed cover areas to the rear of the garage housing the recycling/waste bins appear to be very close to the tree marked 'TE12' which is located on the boundary with the neighbouring property. The corner supporting column would seem to be within 1m of the tree and there is likely to be considerable opportunity for regrettable damage to occur. It is highly probable that the tree in question is providing valuable screening for the neighbouring property, so if this could be looked at it would be much appreciated.	30 April 2020
20/01430/FUL	Change of use of barns into hydro-therapy pool, gymnasium and annexe flat for use in connection with the new dwelling at Elm Farm, Townfield Lane, Mollington, Chester CH1 6NJ. No comments to be made	29 May 2020
20/01411/FUL	Two storey rear and side and single storey rear and side extensions and porch at Willow Brook House, Well Lane, Mollington, Chester CH1 6LD. No comments to be made.	29 May 2020

(2) 19/04597/FUL The Willows: The Parish Council had previously expressed some concerns about the design and scale of the amended dwelling in this application and had been advised that the Planning Officer also had some concerns. Amended plans had now been received which were acceptable to CWaC Planning and the Parish Council had been given a copy of these plans which also showed the outline of the previously approved development marked on them. From these it appeared that the size was now more comparable to the previous proposal. It was not considered that the amendments warranted a formal re-consultation. No comments had been received from neighbours in relation to the first set of plans. It was noted in discussions that the overall size/mass of the main house had been reduced slightly. The ground floor footprint remained generally the same as the previously submitted proposal, apart from the omission of "central" 2-storey bay and reduction in projection of two main side bays. The first floor area had been reduced by amending the southern end of the main house to a single storey volume. The overall height of the amended scheme had been reduced to provide a ridge height of 7.5m (same as the previously approved scheme) by making the pitch of the roof shallower.

## 20.39 FINANCE

(1) **Payments** made since the last meeting:

30.03.20	SO	Amenity Cleaner-wages March	182.00
30.03.20	SO	Parish Clerk-salary March	139.46
31.03.20	Bank	Service Charge	18.00

01.04.20	DD	1&1 website hosting monthly fee	7.19
02.04.20	BACS	Backford Parish Council-share of Members Budget grant	346.00
09.04.20	BACS	Cheshire West & Chester Council – Field Licence fee	300.00
28.04.20	SO	Amenity Cleaner-wages April	193.44
28.04.20	SO	Parish Clerk-salary April	142.27
01.05.20	DD	1&1 website hosting monthly fee	7.19

(2) **Receipts**

14.04.20	Cheshire West & Chester Council – Precept	8,000.00
21.04.20	HMRC Repayment of VAT	320.85

(3) **Balance** at 19 May 2020 £15,769.18 (including £3,355 to be paid in grant to the Village Hall)

(4) **Approval to the use of BACS payments:** The Legislative Reform (Payments by Parish Councils, Community Councils and Charter Trustees) Order 2014 provided the opportunity for Parish Councils to make payments by BACS transfer provided such payments are authorised by the Parish Council. The Parish Council had been using this method of payment very successfully since the Order was made and it was the preferred option for many organisations. It was RESOLVED that payment by BACS should be continued in 2020-21.

## 20.40 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) Councillor Eardley reported that the owners of the Mollington golf course site had been alerted to illegal fishing activity on the ponds at Mollington. The ‘anglers’ were acting irresponsibly and the amount of rubbish, fire pits and discarded line on site had been reported to the Environment Agency enforcement team and to Cheshire Police rural crime unit, who had attended the site on several occasions. The site owners had previously found evidence of this and understood it to have been an informal arrangement tolerated by the Golf Course. Attempts had been made to secure the site and make it difficult to access by anyone other than walkers and cyclists, but balancing the security of the site with the desire to ensure maintenance of some permitted access, alongside that provided by the Public Right of Way, had proved extremely difficult. The ponds were providing a habitat for some protected species, so draining them was not an option. Two options were being explored - to enter into a short-term license with one of the local fishing clubs to manage the ponds in the interim, or to remove the fish under EA guidance. Councillor Eardley would provide further, updated information as this became available.

(2) The Parish Council’s Amenity Cleaner had been self-isolating since March, as required by the Government, but would return to work with immediate effect subject to obeying the distancing rules.

## 20.41 MEETINGS IN 2020-21

Until the lockdown was lifted and further advice was received on the ability of local councils to hold physical meetings, all meetings would be ‘virtual’ and would be held by use of Zoom Video Conferencing. It was RESOLVED that meetings should be held on the following dates in 2020/21:

<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
7 July 2020	5 January 2021
1 September 2020	2 March 2021
3 November 2020	4 May 2021