

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
ELLESBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON-LINE ON MONDAY 18th JANUARY 2021 AT 7.30PM**

Joined: Councillors:
R Alexander (Deputy Chairman) A White
M Glover M McGrail
D Hares

Parish Clerk: R Norris

Members of the Public who joined the meeting:

M Crouch	R Nicholson
M Robins	N Strathon
A Smith	J West
Z Powell	S Guy
R Powell	R Horton
E Hancock	T Miles
M Richards	H Robinson
R Jennings	H-P Verhoeven
S Fish	H Holman

Action

Introduction. Councillor Alexander was to chair the meeting, and explained that whilst the affordable housing project was in the agenda, the meeting planned for the 1st of February was the most suitable forum for parishioners to make their views known on the subject. Councillor McGrail opened the meeting by making a statement about the affordable housing project. His statement is included below.

This statement is to provide an update on the current position regarding the potential Rural Exception Housing Scheme.

- As a function of the Needs Surveys undertaken the Parish Council unanimously agreed that it would support the principle of a small affordable housing scheme within the Parish.
- The Parish Council can confirm that they are not receiving any benefit financial or otherwise and none of the Councillors have any personal interest in this matter, whatsoever.
- A contract has been signed between a landowner and a Housing Association, to sell a defined parcel of land subject to a planning consent for 6 x 2 bed semi-detached houses.
- The applicant will be Hastoe Housing Association and they anticipate submitting an application by March.
- The formal planning application and the process will be via Bucks Planning Authority with all the usual opportunities for opinions to be submitted, directly to them.
- The Planning Authority will determine whether the scheme is in accordance with Planning Policy and the Local Plan and whether this scheme does qualify as a Rural Exception Site suitable for Affordable Housing. The Parish Council will remain as a statutory consultee.

- Hastoe Housing Association are classified as Charitable Status and they are regulated directly by the Government via the Regulator for Social Housing.
- All questions regarding the completed scheme including; demand, costs, local connection criteria etc will be answered directly by Hastoe at a meeting set for 1st February. The terms of which will be an enforceable contractual condition of the planning consent and run in perpetuity.
- Hastoe have sought to establish local opinion via a Pre-planning consultation, which is still live, and closes this Friday 22nd January. They will be fully disclosing all feedback to the Parish Council next week.
- The principle that this scheme is the “thin end of the wedge”, “tip of the iceberg”, “setting a precedent” is simply not accurate. This proposed development is an “exception” and will remain an exception, it is a one-off event. The legal structure of the planning system does not work on the principal of precedent as a factor for making planning decisions, each and every application is considered on its own merits.
- The planning policy and framework which controls development within AONB and Greenbelt land in the Parish will not change in any way, if this scheme is approved.
- It is also worth categorically reiterating that this proposed application is not to be linked to any other planning application either now or in the future and will never be supported by the Parish Council, in consideration of any other planning application.
- If this site does not obtain consent for a Rural Exception Scheme it will be reasonable to assume that there will be no likelihood of affordable housing ever being provided in the Parish.
- Finally, principally because the consultation process is still live, it is not the intention of tonight’s regular Parish Council Meeting, for the Council to debate this proposed planning application, this will take place at a dedicated meeting which has been set for 2 weeks time on 1st February and the Clerk has issued sign in details this afternoon.
Thank you

Item 1.1 Apologies. Apologies were received from Councillor Panikkar and Councillor Hayes is unable to attend on-line.

Item 1.2 Open Forum. The Chairman explained that this was a normal Parish Council meeting with a full agenda, he didn’t want to prolong the meeting with a lengthy discussion on the affordable housing project. However, the Council would listen to peoples concerns. The first subject discussed was the Coombe Hill parking problem. The Council was aware of this and has supported the extension of the parking restrictions along the road. Discussions with the National Trust on enlarging the car park had been positive, but with the National trust suffering from a much reduced income at the moment, it was unlikely that work on this would start in the near future.

Moving onto the affordable housing project, Councillor McGrail opened the discussion with the following statement

The discussion that followed concentrated on several main points with many of the parishioners raising the same or similar points. Firstly, there was considerable concern that the proposed housing went against the principles of the AONB and the Village Design Statement. Moreover, people felt that the project should have been included in the Wycombe District Local Plan. There was much concern that if approved, this housing could be used as a precedent for other housing in the village. Councillor McGrail explained that this wasn’t the case. Other concerns were that the proposed houses were not within easy reach of the bus routes, schools or other public facilities. Some people had moved into the area specifically because Ellesborough is within the AONB and were disappointed that this development might

go ahead. The matter of whether or not the Parish council had a mandate to go ahead with an affordable housing project was also questioned. Furthermore, with the number of houses being built within the local area which includes quite a number of affordable housing units, the need for further units within Ellesborough was questionable. Lastly, there many who felt that Hastoe should not be allowed to be present at the meeting scheduled for 1 Feb 2021. Because, people were generally repeating similar arguments the Chairman closed this section of the meeting at 20.28 so that the rest of the agenda could be dealt with.

Item 1.3 Declarations of Interest. There were no Declarations of Interest from any of the Councillors present.

Item 1.4 Minutes. The minutes of the held on 16 November 2020 were unanimously agreed as being correct. The Clerk will arrange for the Chairman to sign them subsequent to the meeting.

RN, RA

Item 1.5 Affordable Housing. The item had been discussed in full under item 1.2 so no further discussion took place.

Item 1.6 Road Safety Issues. Councillor White told the meeting that the Road Safety meeting had taken place and as a result a letter was to be sent to Thames Valley Police asking for us to be allowed to resume the Speedwatch activities. The Clerk was also going to investigate the cost of updating our existing equipment or replacing it so that data on vehicle speeds and numbers could be obtained more easily. In the long term we would look at approving a further Speedwatch site on the Ellesborough Road just past the church.

Item 1.7 Recreational Facilities. In the absence of Councillor Panikkar, the Clerk said that the safety reports had been received for the playground and playing field. Also because of the Covid restrictions, Risborough Rangers are not using the football pitch at the moment.

Item 1.8 Finance. Councillor Glover informed the meeting that he had carried out the checks on all the finance documents and there were no discrepancies in the figures. The savings and current account balances as per the reconciliation statements were £35,608.24 and £14,504.43 respectively. The following payments made since the last meeting were approved:

Lamps and Tubes (New tree lights)	800213	£511.56
R Norris (Tree Lights, Illuminated Stag, Hedges)	800214	£457.90
PKF Littlejohn (External Audit)	800215	£240.00
Buckinghamshire council (Playground Inspections)	800216	£104.40
D Hares (Tree Lights Installation)	800217	£480.00

Payments made: None

Councillor Glover had already agreed to carry out the next financial check.

MG

Item 1.9 Planning. Councillor McGrail informed the meeting that there were 3 matters that required some attention. The first was an application in retrospect for the dog grooming business at Forge Meadow, Terrick. The Clerk had received an email regarding this and it was agreed that Councillors McGrail and White will arrange to visit the premises to see if any action needs to be taken. There has been an application for a change of use and refurbishment of 2 barns on Lodge Hill and Councillor McGrail has been to see them and they appear to have been used as accommodation in the past, but we will await the request for comments before taking any action. Lastly, there is an application for improvements to Molloway

House in Dunsmore. As the house is well set back from the road Councillor White didn't think that it would be contentious.

Item 1.10 Clerks report and Correspondence, Circulars and Consultation Documents.

The Clerk has been told that at the moment the local elections will be going ahead in May. Councillors need to be aware that they will be asked if they wish to be re-elected. The Clerk will investigate what the timescales will be for the submission of the necessary papers.

RN

Item 1.11 Covid 19. Councillor McGrail reported that despite the severe current restrictions there has been little need for the volunteers. Many were continuing with giving help to neighbours in groups that had been established during the first lockdown.

Item 1.12 Dunsmore. The temporary parking restrictions imposed are scheduled to come to an end on the 31st of January. However, all of the concerned parties, including Ellesborough Parish Council, have asked for them to be extended until they can be made permanent. Councillor White advised that the National Trust was open to the idea of enlarging the car park, but a lack of funds means that it is unlikely to happen in the near future.

Item 1.13 HS2. The Clerk had received an email from Little Missenden Parish Council, who has formed an alliance group with other affected councils to complain about the attitude of HS2 and even Buckinghamshire Council to its concerns about its complaints about HS2 works being handled poorly. Councillors, having seen the correspondence agreed that Ellesborough should ask if they could join the alliance. The Clerk is to reply asking if we may join.

RN

Item 1.14 Precept. The Clerk reported that our reserves are still exceed the recommended value of twice the precept, but during the last financial year they had reduced by some £2,500 to the current figure of £40,000. He suggested that we could reduce the precept still further to £16,000.00 for the year 21/22. The Chairman asked about the grass cutting allowance from Buckingham Council and the Clerk replied that we are still receiving it and it is set at about £2,600 per year. After a short discussion the meeting unanimously approved to set the precept for the year 2021/2022 at £16,000.00. (Clerk's Note Buckingham Council has been informed of this figure and acknowledged receipt).

Item 1.15 Communications Policy. The copy of a communications policy that had been circulated to the Councillors was discussed. All agreed that some form of policy was required, but the Clerk was concerned that the document that had been circulated seemed to be more of a document that could be used to discipline Councillors that contravened it, rather than a document that gave guidance. The Councillors agreed to look at other councils policies and see what was best suited for Ellesborough and Councillor Hares agreed to produce a draft policy.

DH

Item 1.16 Grant to support the Village Magazine. As in the previous 2 years, the Village Magazine Committee has asked for support. This year as the income from advertising has reduced because of the Covid situation, the support is even more necessary and the request is for £850.00. The meeting agreed that the magazine is an important asset to the parish and readily unanimously agreed to donate the sum requested. Clerk to arrange payment.

RN

Item 1.17 Matters of Report. Councillor Glover reported that the refurbishment of the entrance hall of the Parish Hall had been completed with just the new carpet to be laid and now that the main hall had been repainted the whole thing is looking much better for when it can be re-opened. The Chairman thanked everyone concerned with fitting the new lights and

the illuminate stag at the hall. They were a great improvement and well worth the effort. Lastly, The Chairman asked the Clerk to arrange for the bus shelter at Terrick to be inspected and its condition checked.

RN

Item 1.18 Next Meeting. Subject to any restrictions imposed because of the Coronavirus, the next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled for Monday 15 March 2021 at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall.

The meeting closed at 21.26 hrs.

Signed

Councillor R Alexander
Deputy Chairman
Ellesborough Parish Council