

Ugley Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Council Virtual Meeting held at 7.00pm on 22 February 2021.

Present:

Cllr. Nick Shutes (Chairman), Cllr. David Cross (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr. Matt Francis, Cllr. Clayton Powter, Cllr. Elizabeth Reay
and Mrs. Louise Johnson (Parish Clerk).

Members of the Public:

1, plus District Cllr. Janice Loughlin, Essex County Cllr. Ray Gooding

1. Declarations of interest; None.
2. To receive and approve apologies for absence, Cllr. Nick Bowers and Cllr. Roger Pryor.
3. Open to the public.
4. The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 11 January 2021 were approved.

5. District Councillor's Report

A Full Council meeting is being held on 23 February 2021 to approve the budget for 2021/2022.

Uttlesford District Council (UDC) is to invest £35m of public money into developing a new manufacturing base for a global arms company. This has caused a lot of bad feeling. UDC are to introduce a motion for an ethical policy.

The Nolan Principles is a document that all Councillors should sign, it is a commitment to the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life - Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. A motion in December 2020 resulted in some Councillors refusing to sign, a new motion by the Independent Party is being put forward at the meeting on 23 February 2021.

A lot of planning applications are being submitted due to UDC having no Local Plan. Still no site visits are allowed at present due to Covid-19, UDC however, cannot use this reason to delay responding to a planning application.

The Bedwell Road, application for 220 houses is now going directly to appeal for non-determination by UDC.

6. Essex County Councillor's Report

Cllr. Gooding explained that he is not the Highways authority, he is there to hold them to account.

Developers are following a cynical pattern, the planning process is in favour of the developer, especially as UDC have no Local Plan or 5 Years Land Supply. The developer submits a planning application, where part of that application, particularly in relation to Highways, is insufficient, so Highways reject it. This

starts a conversation between Highways and UDC where the developer gains so much information, they can put forward a mitigation that just ticks the boxes, which then Highways cannot object to. Developers are entitled to continue to hold discussions with statutory consultees until and even beyond the last minute before an appeal. Inspectors tell the parties that they should endeavour to reduce areas of disagreements as far as they can before the appeal.

The fact that UDC do not have a 5-year land supply gave considerable weight to the approval at the Fairfield planning application appeal.

The roads around North Hall Road, which is still closed, are in a profoundly serious condition. The environmental agency is demanding specific measures to the project which is delaying the whole process. Cllr. Gooding held a meeting with the cabinet member, Kevin Bentley, of Highways, who is now aware of the situation and hopefully will try and get this moving.

A resident voiced his concerns about how long this was taking and the state of the roads. He had also informed Kemi Badenoch, local MP, and Gavin Jones the Chief Executive of ECC. He asked who is accountable for getting this work completed.

Cllr. Gooding said ultimately Essex Highways are responsible for the work, with Kevin Bentley as the Cabinet Member and Andrew Cook, the director in charge of Highways.

With the schools returning on 8 March 2021, this will increase the traffic, therefore increasing the damage to the roads and verges.

Cllr. Shutes asked why, as it is only a 4-5 feet drop from the road to the riverbank on North Hall Road, was it so complicated to construct a plan to repair it.

Cllr. Gooding said Highways are always constrained on the objections received from other authorities.

Patmore Road is now extremely dangerous for drivers and pedestrians.

Cllr. Gooding said he would pursue getting Patmore Road inspected.

Cllr. Gooding has submitted, through the Local Highways Panel, for a sign to be installed on the bend in Patmore Road, asking drivers not to use their horns, as this is disturbing residents.

The schools are returning on 8 March 2021. There are some issues with home to school transport, having reduced their numbers they now have to go to the full capacity. There is great concern on the loss of education and mental health this has had on children.

7. Clerk's Report.

St. Peter's Church have asked the Parish Council to give a donation towards the church grass cutting contract, the total invoice for the year was £2,680. It was agreed that this seemed a lot of money for grass cutting, plus there were payments in January, October and November, when the grass could not be cut due to the wet weather. As a public body that spends public money, more

information was required. The Parish Council's auditor would also ask for greater detail.

Cllr. Reay said that there is a proposal by the Church to look at the maintenance costs and ways to reduce it. They will look at improving the appearance and biodiversity, reducing the maintenance and protecting the structure, one idea is to allow sheep to graze on part of the land.

It was agreed that the Parish Clerk would reply asking for greater clarification of the invoice.

Henham Parish Council are legally challenging the Fairfield planning application appeal decision, which will lead to a lengthy delay.

8. Financial Report

Cash Statement, January 2021 – Circulated.

Payments for signing

Balance brought forward	£ 7,643.36
VAT return	£ 204.83
Bank account	£,7,848.19

9. Any Other Business (no decisions can lawfully be made under this item).

Cllr. Powter raised the issues whether the Christmas tree on the Green was fit for purpose, as it is now very tall.

Cllr. Gooding thanked Cllr. Cross for the laptops that he donated to the children in schools.

10. Meeting Closed at 8.04pm.