

Iken Parish Council
MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
held on Thursday 13TH August 2020 online via Zoom commencing at 5.30pm

1. Present

Neville Howe (Chair), Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett (Vice Chair), Cllrs Colin Chamberlain, Dr Norman Johnson, Loulou Cooke, Kate Kilburn, Clerk Lorraine Lloyd

Members of the public: Audrey and Jonathan Rutherford, Annabel Chamberlain

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the second Zoom meeting and gave a short overview of the direction of the meeting. He explained that since there were relatively small numbers that Jonathan and Audrey should feel free to join in the meeting as appropriate rather than wait for the allocated slot on the agenda for public sessions.

2. Apologies

Had been received by email from Sir John and Lady Gieve

3. Declarations of interests

All have interest in the River Wall project.

Loulou Cooke and Neville Howe have interests in the Coastal Path project.

4. Minutes of the previous meetings held in May 2020

The Clerk had previously circulated the Minutes and all agreed they were a correct record and could be duly signed and dated by the Chairman as such.

5. Village Hall

A separate meeting of the Parish Council had been held to discuss the village hall as Trustees. An options paper had been produced to try to determine where to go next on the matter. The village hall has rarely been used, perhaps only five times outside of parish meetings in the last couple of decades. There had been two polls carried out over the years and there didn't seem to be an appetite to use the hall. The options looked at were whether to demolish it, repair it, go on to sell it or leave things pretty much as they are.

It was decided that to demolish would be expensive and potentially diminish the value of the plot; doing it up would be expensive and it was not thought anybody would use it anyway. It was thought that if it was left then somebody would have to deal with it later down the road so it was left that the early direction the Trustees should take is to move to sell it. No agents have been appointed as yet and it was thought that the first step is to take some advice. The Trustees would be having a further meeting to work out the required process and would be keeping everyone informed to reassure that the right processes are being followed. As it sits there at the moment there are on-going costs such as insurance and grass cutting, all the utilities have been disconnected so there are no costs in that respect. We just wanted to bring people up to speed as to where we are at the moment and give people an opportunity to have their say.

THH

I think we have made the decision to sell and that we should proceed at the correct speed to make sure that we act as we should as Trustees of this asset. I think it would be nice if we could set ourselves a six or nine month timetable if we can.

AR

I notice that the rules are different if farmers buy the land and I know that Richard Mann is also interested, what are the differences in the rules for him if he were to buy the land compared to a non-farmer?

NH

I think that is a good question and I think you have put your finger on it because that is one of the things we will want to explore further. I don't understand what the differences are and how that would work so that is one of the things we would need to take advice on.

LL

It is a different planning process for farmers. They still pay a fee and still need to have plans approved.

AR

I also noticed from the Minutes in May that the Council would like to get the best possible price for the land and then in your more recent meeting it suggests that the best price is not necessarily the best option. I just wondered which of those two thinkings you were now having. Whether you would like to get the best price or whether you were going to go for the best option.

NH

The obligation that we have as Trustees is to make sure we are acting in the best interests of the village. To that extent we have to make sure that we are looking for the best price for it but that is not necessarily the best price at any expense like ending up with something that the village is unhappy with. That is the reason we must strike the right balance, to act in the

best interest of the village as a whole because clearly we are all beneficiaries of this and undoubtedly an important part is price, but it is not the only part.

AR

How will you ask the village what they would like because not many of the villagers come to the meetings so what will be the way forward in trying to get people's opinions?

NH

Part of the way forward in this respect is firstly to work out what the options are because although we can ask the village right now I don't think we fully understand what the options are. Until we move things forward I don't think we are in a position to ask for people's opinions.

AC

You stated that there is a different process for farmers; does that mean the scheme is equally fair? I understand you have got to examine it but that is the question.

LC

I am not an expert on this because we have never done it. My understanding is that it is not to favour farmers but it is to favour business. It could be an expedite in planning if it is relevant to their business but I don't really know. I think Neville is right in what he is saying. I don't think there is any dichotomy between the best for the village and the highest price. The best for the village doesn't necessarily mean the highest price. I don't think that is a problem for any of us as councillors to see that the best for the village is something that we have got to work out. It doesn't necessarily mean let's just go in for the maximum we can get.

CC

What is absolutely fundamental is the fiduciary role that we have as parish councillors, we are not actually Trustees we have a fiduciary role, is that we establish the facts about this site. There are people that think that has got a totally different value to what I suspect it has. We need to investigate that so we can then go to everybody and say "Look, this is the proposal, we propose to sell it and it come in different forms but we need to be open, transparent and everybody to understand exactly what the truth is about the site and then we can proceed.

AR

What happens to the money? Does it go to the Council and then you decide what you would like to do with it?

CC

Yes, it is the Parish Council that is selling so it belongs to the Parish Council and then they can decide what to do with it.

NH

We have been quite careful about not saying, not working out or even thinking about what might happen to those monies yet for fear of over complicating the matter. We have got one thing to think about which is that we have got something at the moment which in the future is going to deteriorate and which will be a problem for the Parish Council. So we are concentrating on selling it and then working out what we will do with the money. It is an asset to the Parish Council for the village.

THH

Audrey, the reason I said about proceeding at the appropriate pace is as Colin has explained, partly because it is our fiduciary duty to act in the best interest of the village and from my point of view, and I am sure from other colleagues point of view, because I will return to the chair and I want to ensure that your household and Lynette's household are not lying awake at night worrying about what is going to happen. That is why we are not going to proceed at speed but are going to proceed at appropriate pace to satisfy exactly what Colin has described which he has summed up brilliantly.

The reality is at the end of the day this is going to come down to money unless someone outbids and intends to build an incinerator on the land in which case I can't imagine the Council will agree it is in the best interest of the village.

6. Roadsides

NJ

There seems to be a problem with the parking on the Tunstall Road roadsides blocking off the passing places. I think Lorraine has been doing admirable work finding out what the position is and what it isn't. Clearly it is not illegal to park there so long as the cars and vans are not blocking the highway and then it is a police matter. I personally think the thing to do is be tolerant for a month or so and as soon as it starts raining it will be a non-problem. The other thing to do is to put up notices of No Parking by Order of the Parish Council in each passing place.

THH

I went and looked at the capacity of the car park this evening and calculated in my head that there was probably room for another 60 or 70 cars, even if it wasn't mown so I think there is no shortage of room to park cars. I am with Norman on this because I think come the 1st September this may not be a problem.

KK

Schools go back about 5th or 6th September and it will disappear and I think there may be the odd weekend in September when it might happen again then it will naturally disappear.

LL

The Highways Department have assured us that they will advise that any signs that we have put up in Iken will not be removed by their department. Anybody else of course could remove them wilfully. Highways are prepared to help in any way they can.

NH

I think what I am hearing is that we are not wanting any signs to go up. The Covid environment is a different environment than one we have had before. I suspect next year won't be as busy as this year from what I have seen in terms of people coming down to the beach and walking down by the river. Let's not rush to put signs up. Let's assess the situation as we go.

7. Finance Report

Colin Chamberlain reported that there had been no income or payments and the external auditors had accepted the exemption of a full audit. Annabel Chamberlain voiced her opinion at the way the RFO position was transferred to the clerk and Colin Chamberlain added that he had not been given an opportunity to publicly discuss the matter before the decision had been made. Dr Norman Johnson expressed concern at the way this was done by email rather than prior personal consultation with CC. Sir Thomas Hughes Hallett apologised that Colin had been upset by the way in which the matter had been handled. Colin Chamberlain said that he accepted their apologies.

8. Partial blockage of footpath by Jumbo's Cottage

There was a discussion about the chicane across the footpath leading from the car park to the river which appeared about three months ago. Several people had complained that it restricted prams and wheelchairs from using the path. It was pointed out that before it was erected it used to get power boats and jet skis being brought down there which had been seen cutting up the seals.

It was revealed that 25 years ago there was always a chicane there for many years to stop boats from getting down there and then one day it disappeared.

Consideration will probably be given to it by the Coastal Path.

9. Broadband

There had been a recent flurry of activity and a few BT customers had been upgraded with more filtering through. There was a general discussion.

10. Changeover of Chair/Vice Chair

NH spoke of the changeover with Tom for Chairman/Vice Chairman. He also spoke of replacement councillor for Kate Kilburn who was retiring with immediate effect and also a further councillor.

THH spoke of enlisting a councillor from the south of Iken and tried to encourage Audrey. There is also a volunteer who would quite like to become a member of the Council from around this area.

LL informed the meeting that the PCC could co-opt immediately into the vacant seat.

11. Sizewell

There was a general discussion about Sizewell C. It was thought that if nothing happens with the village hall in two years' time then there is potential for bidding for funds from Sizewell for doing it up.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 THH asked if there had actually been dog-napping in the village as per circulated email. He thought that the Parish Council ought not to circulate information of such a nature which included peoples vans and number plates without actual fact.

12.2 KK asked that the grass not be cut in the middle of the picnic site because it encourages boy racers in the winter over the weekends.

13. Date of the next meeting – TBA