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Office Hours:
Tuesday 9:30 – 15:00
Wednesday 9:30 – 15:00
Thursday 9:30 – 15:00
Friday CLOSED



Clerk to the Council
Mrs. D. Taylor-Pitkin
Parish Room
Old School Centre
West End
PORLOCK
Somerset, TA24 8QD

Parish Council

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 08th April 2020 via zoom **<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/960383809> at 7:00pm.**

Members Present: Cllr. McCoy, Chairman,
Cllr. Boden, Cllr. Fraser, Cllr. Mrs. Gable, Cllr. Hancock, Cllr. McCanlis, Cllr. Maw
Cllr. Milne, Cllr. Rayner, Cllr. Ware and Cllr. Wood.
Also present: Mrs. D Taylor-Pitkin (Clerk)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Ellicott due to work commitments.

2. Declarations of Interest and Disclosable Pecuniary Interest Dispensations

None were noted.

3. The Chairman's statement

The Chairman provided the following statement:

We are living in unprecedented times which demand unusual levels of sacrifice and forbearance from us all. Nearly 40% of our community are categorised as elderly and/or vulnerable and the Council, in conjunction with others, has moved in a timely way to address their needs.

Unfortunately, in recent days I have received criticism from some of the new councillors, regarding non-compliance with standing orders and issues as regards transparency, communication and allocation of funds. The Chairman of Porlock Parish Council has always had a somewhat informal approach over the 30 years I have been a councillor and, with the benefit of hindsight, perhaps I as Chairman could have done some things differently. However, I believe we have operated legally and in the best interests of our community. A time of national crisis is not the moment to address this. Any outstanding matters, contentious or otherwise, need to be left until such time as we can have a face-to-face meeting. We are experimenting with the Zoom platform and the intent is that we will deal with only the most pressing matters until things are back to normal.

I would like to bring you update with what has been happening recently. Over the weekend of 15/16 March, news of the coronavirus escalation broke on the TV. During the Sunday evening I received several telephone calls asking how the PC would react and offering help. In consequence, I formed a small committee comprising Richard Growden and Debbie Stanyon, representing the PVTa, Cllrs Milne, Maw and Wood, Roger Hall (ex-councillor) and Janet Milne to take minutes of the meeting. I chose these people because we needed a small group with expertise to take action quickly. Others who could have been approached were in lock-down or dealing with their own business arrangements. We met the following morning at 10 am and set up an action plan to distribute letters and cards to be filled in by would-be volunteers to every house in Porlock, West Porlock and Porlock Weir.

On Tuesday morning Chris and Roger Miles and Chris Fitzgerald printed 900 of these letters. They were then distributed around the area by 19 volunteers, some from the council, some from PVTa. We held another short meeting to update ourselves on Thursday 19th. Over 100 volunteers' names had been collected and these had to be sorted to establish how many of them were over 70 years of age, and their addresses mapped to assist the call centre being established in the Visitor Centre. It became evident that more information was needed, which had to be collated, checked and amended as we worked, before a second batch of letters could be printed and distributed on 22/23 March by the same volunteers as before. My wife and I personally delivered 300 letters. These actions seem to have been well-received by the community and I am indebted to everyone who has helped with this project to ensure the well-being of our village.

With the help of the Visitor Centre manager, a telephone helpline manned by the PVTa was set up for residents needing assistance of help with shopping or getting prescriptions. Over the last week, we have been setting up an email system on both the PC and PVTa websites to disseminate further updates in order to obviate the need for printing and distribution in line with the strict government rules on social contact. Everything seems to be working well. The helpline has already received 50 or so calls. These managerial arrangements had to be made by phone conversations and email as we were now in total lock-down. I must have responded to 300 or so emails, and innumerable phone calls.

As Chairman, I have been hit by the triple whammy of the coronavirus pandemic, Debbie our Clerk's illness and hospitalisation, and the finance computer dying the death. Bills have had to be paid and other council administrative matters dealt with. I have also had to address problems such as unwanted visitors in a virus-free area (so far), motorhomes trying to park up in car parks, closing down of playgrounds and public toilets and laying off of staff, an over-flowing septic tank on the path to Porlock Weir and being asked by a villager if a local farmer could provide a dumping ground for his garden waste. (The answer was no).

These are unprecedented times and there is no playbook for how to respond. I and other Council members who have been in the forefront and those of us in the community who have the capacity to respond have risen to the challenges as we saw them. I sincerely believe that we have done our best, given the circumstances, to help safeguard our village.

Cllr. Ware **PROPOSED** to formerly note his appreciation and full confidence in the Chairman fulfilling his duties.
SECONDED by Cllr. Gable.

4. Public Participation

None were present.

5. The PPC to APPROVE the suspension of non-essential Full Council Meetings for the next two months pending update. (Following information provided by NALC the current Chairman and Vice Chairman will remain in place until an Annual Meeting is held (possibly next year) unless the Council decide to elect a replacement earlier)

PROPOSED Cllr. Maw

SECONDED Cllr. Milne

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Cllr. Rayner requested confirmation of the term "non-essential business", the Clerk clarified that in this current climate this is deemed as anything not directly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cllr. McCanlis queried the format of the current Agenda and the Minutes for the Full Council meeting held on 11th March 2020. The Chairman advised the Minutes for the previous meeting have not yet been completed due to the Clerks illness and subsequent hospitalisation for pneumonia. The Clerk stated that as the Agenda

is for an Extraordinary Meeting the normal format does not apply and following information released by NALC and advice from Salc it was considered best practise to solely focus on the issue at hand. For future Full Council Meetings the format of the Agenda shall remain the same.

Cllr. Rayner requested clarity on the official role of the Council during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Clerk confirmed SALC had advised that there is currently no official role for the Parish Council, however many are acting as lead organisers of volunteers and engaging with their communities to identify the vulnerable.

6. The PPC to APPROVE delegation of the following responsibilities:

- Pre-Approved payments to be issued electronically by the Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman/Vice Chairman of the Finance Committee.
- Un-scheduled payments to be reviewed by the Finance Committee and voted on by email.
- Planning applications to be reviewed by the Planning Committee and voted on via email.

PROPOSED Cllr. Ware

SECONDED Cllr. Gable

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

7. The PPC to APPROVE continuation of the Grass Cutting Contract following a completed Risk Assessment and adherence to the Government Guidelines for Covid-19:

PROPOSED Cllr. Boden

SECONDED Cllr. Hancock

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

There being no other business the meeting closed at 19:35.

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10th June 2020 Chairman