



HALE PARISH COUNCIL
OF THE HALTON BOROUGH IN
THE COUNTY OF CHESHIRE



**MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF HALE PARISH COUNCIL HELD REMOTELY ON
MONDAY 16th November 2020 AT 7.30pm**

Present: cllr Mitchell, cllr Kierman, cllr Williams, cllr Travaskis, cllr Wright,
cllr Cleary, cllr Anderson, cllr Spargo

1. Apologies from cllr Healey
2. No interests were declared
3. No members of the public were present to make representation.
4. The Minutes for Hale Parish Council meeting on 15th October 2020 were considered. Cllr Cleary proposed an amendment to item 8(i) stating that he actually exited the remote meeting after item 11 had been discussed. This was agreed and the minutes amended accordingly.

Cllr Mitchell contested the record described under item 8(ii) once again stating that she was alone other than in the presence of her pet cat. She stated that she had recently taken advice from Chalc and had been advised that even if she had have had somebody present in her home during the meeting that it would be totally acceptable as it was during an “open” part of the meeting. The Clerk and other councilors suggested that the issue was not with the presence of a person or persons unknown rather that they would be undeclared in the meeting. Councillor Kierman reminded cllr Mitchell that the object of this item was to record a true series of events at the previous meeting and not to re-enter discussion about the incident.

A vote to approve the minutes was taken with cllrs Spargo, Kierman, Williams, Wright and Anderson in favour. Cllrs Cleary and Mitchell were against.

The Minutes were approved with the relevant amendment.

5. All payments for the period 8th October 2020 – 6th November 2020 were approved by members. Cllr Cleary asked for clarification about the transfer of £6495.00 to Hale Village Hall account. It was explained that it was the remaining balance of the budget allocated from the precept to The Village Hall. The Chair further explained that authority for payments had been raised as an issue in a previous internal audit. It had therefore been necessary to open bank accounts with Unity Trust Bank requiring 2 signatories. During the employment of the previous Clerk there had been a mix up in relation to some payments and the accounts from which they were paid. It was decided that the most efficient way to resolve the banking issues

was to close the relevant accounts and start with a fresh account requiring 2 signatures from 5 approved signatories. The Chair explained that the balance from the previously used Nat West account could now be transferred into the new Unity Account and then be closed. This would then leave the two remaining Unity Trust accounts with exclusive use for i) Hale Parish Council business ii) Hale Village Hall business.

6. It was agreed that the Clerk will contact Cllr Mike Wharton regarding fly tipping in Carr Lane. During discussions it was noted that previous approaches to Halton BC on behalf of concerned residents had proved unsuccessful due to budget restrictions. Additional management, monitoring and on-costs proved to be prohibitive and the previously explored avenues unproductive. Cllr Wright suggested that current refuse licensing restrictions may be partly responsible for fly tipping with the Chair suggesting that it may also be attributable to individuals from outside the Halton boundary. Cllr Mitchell suggested that improved technology such as CCTV or ANPR might be considered and that the possibility of funding or part funding from the Parish Council be explored. It was acknowledged unanimously that there is a noteworthy problem which has the potential for a significant accident to occur and the matter should not be ignored.

8. It was agreed to approve the proposed Scheme of Delegation in a named vote

Cllrs Spargo, Kierman, Wright, Williams, Trevaskis and Anderson were in favour. Cllr's Cleary and Mitchell were against the motion

Cllr Cleary opened debate by asking the Clerk if he was now qualified.

Cllr Mitchell advised correspondence from ChALC suggested it is reasonable and good practice for a scheme of delegation to be in place, also adding it is inadvisable to overwhelm a Clerk who has had no formal training with an overly ambitious delegation scheme. It was unclear how ChALC were aware of what training staff within Hale Parish Council have or have not undertaken and Cllr Mitchell confirmed she had advised ChALC that it was understood the Clerk's training would commence in October and that he is not yet qualified. Cllr Mitchell advised that the representative from ChALC had been doing the job much longer than ourselves. Whilst it was unclear the length of time Cllr Mitchell was referring to (REMOVED), the Chairman advised that without being a clerk at Hale PC, it would be very difficult for a representative of ChALC to fully understand the specifics of the situation and how the clerk feels a scheme of delegation would assist them in their role.

Cllr Spargo highlighted the fact that the role of a Clerk/ Proper Officer requires responsibility to manage the Council's affairs and that trust must be placed in staff who have been employed to fill such roles.

Cllr Trevaskis felt a scheme of delegation provided clarity for both Councillors and staff to fully understand the scope of the responsibilities of the Clerk/Proper Officer, the Council, and its Committees. Cllr Trevaskis drew attention to the fact that no member of staff can undertake any activity that breaches the Council's policies and procedures, therefore any delegation would always result in staff achieving the outcomes that have been agreed by the corporate body. Cllr Trevaskis also noted the periods of time in which the Council do not meet for two months (summer and Christmas), advising that the authority should not sit idle at this time and if there are staff employed to fulfil roles, they should be able to continue activities efficiently on the Council's behalf. Cllr Trevaskis advised that a scheme of delegation was commonplace in local authorities.

Cllr Cleary advised that he disagreed 100% with everything Cllr Trevaskis said. Cllr Cleary advised that the Council had overruled Committee decisions historically and referenced a War Memorial Committee meeting where he felt a prior employee had been deliberately obtuse. Cllr Cleary was reminded by the Chairman that no such overruling had occurred, and rather the War Memorial Committee meeting that Cllr Cleary was referring to had actually not been held lawfully (an agenda had not been published three clear days prior to the meeting, rendering the meeting unlawful). Cllr Cleary advised every council may have a staff member to action the buying of paper but advised it is not paid for until it goes before the full council and the finance committee before it's passed. Cllr Cleary also highlighted that if anything goes wrong the finger would be pointed at the Clerk as he is not qualified and akin to an apprentice.

Cllr Trevaskis advised it was not possible for every purchase to be approved by the Council within its current activity schedule as often there are unforeseen costs associated with the facilitation of the Council's events. Cllr Spargo seconded these sentiments and advised the Council must be efficient not cumbersome.

Cllr Kierman asked Cllr Cleary what he would like to see done. Cllr Cleary responded advising that when something goes wrong in a Council the member of staff responsible loses their job because of it. Cllr Kierman and Cllr Cleary both asked the opinion of the Clerk/ Proper Officer. The Clerk/Proper Officer confirmed agreement with Cllr Spargo that it was cumbersome to not have delegated authority and mentioned examples of it substantially interfering with the day-to-day efficiency of the Council. He also highlighted that the comments from individual members appeared to suggest that a member of staff should hold a position of office without the appropriate delegation to effectively fulfil the duties of that office. Cllr Cleary suggested that the Council should scrub out 'parish council' and replace this with the 'Proper Officer's Council'. Cllr Mitchell agreed.

Cllr Cleary was invited to attend the next meeting of the wellbeing working party to help him understand the need for delegation. Cllr Cleary asked who attended the events organised by the wellbeing working party and highlighted the fact that we are amidst a worldwide pandemic. He suggested that the Council is holding events without knowing who is attending which could see people breaching government guidance. Cllr Kierman confirmed attendees completed registration forms for all events. Cllr Cleary advised travel was not permitted within the guidance issued by the Government. Cllr Kierman confirmed that attendees were local, from Hale Village and that Government guidance was strictly adhered to. Cllr Kierman also highlighted that Halton BC were satisfied the events adhered to guidelines. It was also noted that Halton BC held their own series of events at the same time. Cllr Cleary asked if everybody has signed the fire register upon arrival. It was confirmed that 'track and trace' details were obtained from every attendee prior to arrival.

Cllr Kierman suggested that Cllr Cleary did not appreciate the difficulties involved in presenting such events as he did not get involved in anything organised by the Parish Council. Cllr Cleary advised we were in the middle of a worldwide pandemic and questioned why he would turn up for an event, suggesting he would rather go to a football match or music concert. There followed a heated discussion between cllr Cleary and cllr Kierman regarding commitment to the role of a Parish Councillor. Cllr Kierman expressed an opinion that she felt that certain Councillors did not contribute for the benefit of the Parish Council and in fact often worked against it. She stated that she felt that the Parish Council should work together to be effective and that certain councillors had other priorities. At this point cllr Kierman left the remote meeting.

- 9/ It was unanimously agreed to donate the sum of £150.00 under section 137 of the local government act 1972 to a local pre-school nursery Little Dragons. The donation

will be used to promote a local environmental initiative and to assist with the purchase of traffic calming measures to protect the local hedgehog population.

The meeting was closed at 9.15pm.

The following dates for Parish Council Meetings as follows were recorded :-

Monday 25th January 2021
Monday 15th February 2021
Monday 15th March 2021
Monday 19th April 2021