Minutes of the Meeting of Littleton Parish Council held at on Monday 12 October 2020.

PRESENT: Parish Councillor Caroline Marrison Gill (in the Chair) and Parish

Councillors Anne Stockdale, Rob Jones, Huw Morgan and Hilary

Davies

IN ATTENDANCE: CW&C Councillor Stuart Parker and local residents Simon Mageean, Eirlys Smalldon, Allan Samuel, Deborah McNally, Julia Baines, Neil Haslett, Jonathan Mayman, Andy Marsden and Madeline Temple Murray.

20/61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clive Lovering, Bettie Gilliatt and PCSO Linda Bailey.

20/62 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

The Chairman moved forward the Public Rights of Way item on the Agenda to accommodate the local residents present who wished to discuss the issue that had arisen affecting the footpaths between Littleton and Christleton.

The landowner had erected fencing around the borders of his fields apparently in response to damage having been done to his crops by walkers and their dogs over the summer months when the countryside saw a dramatic increase in people using the outdoors for recreation. This also effectively blocked off the amenity paths which had been in long use up to that point. This action had caused great upset in the local community. There were also long running concerns about damage to trees and hedgerows on that land over the years as well as the use of soil conditioner with a high plastic content.

The Chairman reported that both Littleton Parish Council and Christleton Parish Council were addressing these issues jointly, with herself and Councillor Anne Stockdale representing LPC on the Footpath Action Group which was taking the lead on the matter. One major course of action would be to make an application for the amenity paths currently blocked to be included on the Definitive Map which would then afford them protection.

Littleton Tree Warden Simon Mageean then presented his report on the environmental impact of the activities of the landowner over the last 6-7 years. This included the alleged use of herbicide to harm the hedgerows; their removal in places and damage to ancient trees. This was at a time when farmers were encouraged by the government to act as custodians of the countryside with a more balanced approach to farming and the protection of the environment being adopted.

He reported that a meeting had been held with the CW&C PROW Officer who noted the unfortunate deployment of barbed wire on the fence facing walkers which he recommended should be replaced in some areas by plain wire on the grounds of safety. The fixing of wire to a tree was also noted. The southerly path did appear to be rather narrow but it was pointed out that the width of the path was measured from the bottom of the hedge.

Also some parts of the fencing had been constructed with big industrial panels which were completely out of tune with the surroundings. It was hoped these were only temporary.

As the PROW Officer could only take action in relation to official rights of way the permissive footpaths which were currently blocked off would have to be formally registered with the Definitive Map. This would require evidence of 20+ years of use. Efforts were already underway to gather the evidence required. It was acknowledged, however, that the process of achieving this was lengthy.

The situation had become more tense in recent days when the landowner had erected signs to warn walkers that dogs found in the field were liable to be shot. This was made more awkward by the fact that the fencing had gaps in places so the field was not 100% secure.

There followed discussion on the state of the land relative to its drainage which appeared to be insufficient for the amount of water flowing through it. It was suggested that this was due in some part to the ditch not having been adequately maintained. Mr Mageean pointed out that hedgerows also had a valuable part to play in the drainage process which is compromised when they are removed. The use of soil conditioner with a high plastic content was also contributing to the problem.

The Parish Council agreed to support the Footpath Action Group in working towards a solution to the compromised footpaths including applications to the Definitive Map. In the meantime the Clerk would contact the police to ascertain what advice the landowner had been given in relation to dogs straying into his fields as it was surprising that they had allegedly told him he could shoot any offending animals.

DT

20/63 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 September 2020 be

confirmed as a correct record

**20/64 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

1) Parish Field – Incursion by Travellers – the Clerk reported that a claim for the costs incurred by the Parish Council for the removal of the travellers and subsequent clearing of the site was in train with the insurers but that a complication had arisen in that the solicitor for the insurers had asked for proof that LPC owned the field. The Clerk had approached the Land Registry who had no record pertaining to the field. However, the Parish Council possessed documents showing that the land in 1817 was owned by the “Guardians of Littleton Poor” and in 1847 as being under the “Guardianship of the Littleton Poor”. Responsibility for the poor would have passed to the Parish Council when it was constituted in 1894.

It was hoped that this information would satisfy the solicitor but it might be necessary to pursue this with the County Archivist.

2 Athlete Factory – the Clerk reported that there was no record of any planning permission gained for the work being carried out behind the gym. Councillors wondered whether this could be the replacement for the day nursery and asked the Clerk to look into this. **DT**

**20/65 ROAD MATTERS**

1) A51 Tarvin Road Improvement Scheme – Councillor Rob Evans reported that he was still awaiting developments arising from his meeting with Chris Matheson MP. It was still unclear as to whether the scheme included a controlled crossing.

2) Cycling Infrastructure – it was reported that progress was being made with the cycling plans for the area.

3) Littleton Bypass – Councillor Morgan pointed out that the CW&C CEO’s second response to the concerns raised by the Parish Council had referred to a bypass and felt it was important to keep the issue in the public awareness.

**20/66 PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

1) 20/03061/FUL – Stonehurst, 85 Tarvin Road, Littleton – Single Storey Rear Extension and Rendering of Existing House

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council has no objection to the proposed development

2) 20/03187/FUL – 25 Grove Gardens, Littleton – Removal of Conservatory. Erection of Single Storey Extension to the Rear. Dormer Rear Extension

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council has no objection to the proposed development

3) Planning Inspectorate – Appeal for 28 Tarvin Road Change of Use etc - Appeal dismissed - noted

**20/67 PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES**

# The Clerk presented his customary report on the finances of the Parish Council making special reference to action taken in agreement with the Chairman to sign up for Zoom for meetings going forward. This was necessary as the free version had limitations.

RESOLVED: that the report of the Clerk be received

**20/68 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

RESOLVED: that the following payments be authorised:- £

1) Clerk’s salary – Oct (less tax) 118.40

2) HMRC – PAYE – Oct 29.60

3) Typing and office services 13.50

4) Litter Warden – 15 hours @ £5 75.00

5) Clerk – reimbursement for Zoom fee (October) 14.39

**20/69 CLERK’S EXPENSES**

RESOLVED: that the Clerk’s expenses be reimbursed in the sum of £2.00

**20/70** **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED**

Since their last meeting the Parish Council had received correspondence which included:-

Cheshire West and Chester Council – Planning notifications

Cheshire Constabulary – PCSO Linda Bailey – Newsletters

Cheshire Association of Local Councils – E Bulletins

Correspondence re Footpath Issue from local residents Simon Mageean, Pamela Linty, Kieran Skinner, Margaret Russell, Michelle Whalley, Rory Callan, Jonathan Mayman, Gareth Edwards.

Kate Pritchard re TPOs

Allan Samuel – Traffic Survey Along Pearl Lane 25 September 2020

**20/71 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

RESOLVED: That the next Meeting of the Parish Council be held on

Monday 7 December 2020

**20/72 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1) Litter Gatherer – Councillor Stockdale asked whether any progress had been made in stopping the individual in the parish from gathering rubbish and dumping it in certain places. This was being pursued by PCSO Linda Bailey and the Clerk undertook to follow this up with her. **DT**

2) Danger From Trees – Councillor Stockdale reported that a tree on the footpath adjacent to Fir Tree Lane was dangerous due to rotten branches. These had been removed and the PROW Officer informed.

3) Field on Fir Tree Lane – it was reported that 5 cars had been removed from the field which had caused concern previously but the caravan remained. More fencing and agricultural equipment had been dumped there.