

Killamarsh Parish Council

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Draft Minutes Are Subject To Approval At The Next Annual Parish Meeting.

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Killamarsh Parish Council
Held on Monday 24th May 2021 at The Parish Suite, Killamarsh. This meeting was held in
accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12 (para 14)**

Commenced: 6.05pm – Concluded:7.07pm

Parish Councillors Present: Cllrs Steve Clough , Nick Challenger, David Drabble, Carol Lacey, Stuart Mullins, Alex Platt, Mo Potts, Bill Rice, Lillian Robinson, Wendy Tinley, John Windle, Nick Whitehead.

Absent Parish Councillors: Chris Curzon, Barry Jones, and Eva Thompson.

District and County Councillors: None

Officer: Safia Kauser - Locum Parish Clerk, minute taker

Members of the Public: Two members of the public;

1. Item 1: Chairman's Announcements

To receive the Chairman's opening announcements including welcome and introductions.

The Chairman welcomed everyone back to the first face-to-face meeting that was being held following the lifting of some government restrictions due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

2. Item 2: Apologies

To receive any apologies of absence.

Apologies for absence were received from parish councillor Cllr E Thompson.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept apologies of absence from Cllr E Thompson.

3. Item 3: Minutes

To receive the minutes of the public meeting held on the 25th November 2019 and to note that no annual parish meeting was held in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (copy attached).

This was noted.

4. Item 4: Chairman's Annual Report

To receive the Chairman's annual report for the 2020/21 municipal year.

The Chairman read out his annual report as follows:

- 2020/2021 has probably been the most challenging year for the public to date. It has been nothing short of astounding that the majority of local public have adapted to the COVID 19 pandemic and have followed many rules that have been imposed during the lockdowns we have experienced.
- In dealing with the practical day to day issues of COVID 19, ill-health and in some cases the

loss of loved ones, the public have demonstrated a true British characteristic of rising to the challenge when the chips are down. Despite the forward challenge of variants of this cruel disease, we can move forward with some optimism as vaccinations continue to be administered and our way of life slowly returns. Naturally, we'll all be adjusting and doing things slightly differently in the months and years to come.

- We have been one of a small number of councils that reacted quickly to the rapidly changing situation and established an emergency committee in March 2020, just prior to the official lockdown notice issued on 23rd March. This was not without its challenges though we resumed full Parish Council and Committee meetings as soon as we were able to via video conferencing like many other Councils have, aiming collectively to move things forward.
- Councils have been required to hold face to face meetings since the 6th May and social distancing measures still apply. Our annual meeting is the first time in 14 months that Killamarsh Parish Councillors will have met together in the Parish Suite at the Sports Centre. We have risen to the challenges of staff working from home, meeting with each other and residents over the internet and Councillors having limited meetings to take practical activities forward while observing the rules governing public activity around the pandemic. Due to the challenges of COVID 19 just before our planned annual meeting in 2020, we were advised that this could not take place due to the lockdown preventing us from holding a public meeting in the timeframe required for that year, so this is the first Annual meeting and Chair's report since 2019.

- **Our Council**

It has been over a year of challenge and transition for the council, with the focus on sustainability of key local facilities and the protection of our local workforce operating both the Parish Council offices and Sports Centre.

- An early audit of Parish financial arrangements was commissioned by the Parish Council in July 2019 and carried out by North East Derbyshire District Council (NEDDC), resulting in a report being delivered in February 2020 highlighting a range of long-standing concerns that needed addressing. Given the challenges we have faced throughout this past year we have made some progress; though continue to bring outstanding issues to order and in some cases started again from scratch. This has meant in some instances we have had to take a step back to take two steps forward.

- **To date, we have made the following changes:**

All financial transactions were previously undertaken manually with a cheque book system, signed monthly. This has now been transferred to online banking driving administrative and cost efficiencies

- Payroll was undertaken manually by the Parish staff. This is now being undertaken by NEDDC, gaining further time and cost efficiencies
- Implemented and updated policies and procedure, with more to follow
- Moved the accounting system from manual, double reporting to a simple financial management system (software), which was in place but not in full use by the Parish office, bringing administrative and cost benefits
- A change of internal auditor to provide clearer reports on all areas following past discrepancies
- Implementation of an electronic purchase order system, so invoices can be matched with an order in line with financial regulations
- Reduction of cash deposits on site, reducing the risk of loss, theft, and potential for fraud
- Tighter budget monitoring, allowing for a 3-year projection to assist with short to medium-term planning.

- **Our Precept for 2021-22**

After setting our budget for the 2020-21 financial year with a zero increase in our Parish precept, we could not have envisaged what was about to take place just a few short months later. When the lockdown was implemented on 23rd March 2020, we had to close every aspect of the Parish Council and Sports Centre facilities. Decisions quickly followed to decide on the actions we needed to take to ensure the Councils finances were protected. Given that both the Sports Centre and Bar/Catering elements were losing in the region of £400k between them and being placed in a position of losing any day-to-day revenue, it cast a severe shadow of concern over Parish finances and budgetary challenges for the forthcoming financial year.

- However, due to the early planning and interventions we were able to take appropriate action to preserve jobs where we could, but also to look after our valued staff in the best way we could, given the circumstances we faced.
- Our status as a Parish Council did not afford us the benefit of grant funding, though because we acted swiftly in decision making, we were able to keep the Parish Council on a stable financial footing where some other Councils have faced far worse impacts. With robust financial decision making and cost control, we have been able to rebuild some of our financial reserves to a level within the legally permitted limit, a point of criticism in the forementioned financial audit report. Careful financial management has also allowed the Council to set another 0% increase in the Parish precept for the financial year 2021-22, benefiting Parish residents for a further year.
- **Restructure**
While continuing to try and manage the financial situation brought about by COVID19, we had to make some extremely difficult decisions, which in part brought forward our review of how the Parish Council was structured. This led to a full review of the cost effectiveness of the Parish Office and the services it provides.
- The outcome of the review and the ongoing Covid-19 situation has brought the loss of some valued members of staff, but this has now allowed us to apply the changes necessary to move forward positively and appoint new positions, of which some are currently advertised.
- **Sports Centre**
Given the financial underperformance of the Sports Centre over recent years, a report was commissioned by the Parish Council and undertaken by NEDDC delivering its results in February 2020. The report indicated many areas where implementing changes could potentially increase income for the Parish Council, however this would have meant significant investment in the site and the Parish Council having to borrow up to £1m. This would have increased the financial burden to the Parish resulting in the risk of further increases to the Parish precept, which is already significantly higher than the vast majority of other Parish Councils across the nation.
- As result of the report, the Parish Council engaged with NEDDC to look at various options to move this forward. The outcome of a detailed investigation indicated that the only realistic option was to transfer the Centre to NEDDC to manage as part of their portfolio of sites, as their experience, expertise and economies of scale would far exceed any potential of the Parish Council to retain the facilities, increase income and be self-sustaining in the long term. Secondly, the council was also mindful that it would address the issue of double subsidisation for sports facilities where residents already contribute to the NEDDC funds for other district facilities as part of the district council contribution in council tax.
- Following much ratification and deliberation, in January 2021 both the Parish Council and NEDDC approved the option in principle of NEDDC taking over the sports centre on a 50-year lease. The principle was based around both parties being able to negotiate a deal that met requirements on both sides and was handled by the respective legal representatives for each. A working group was implemented to thrash out the details and discussions progressed reaching an agreeable position in early May 2021, and the signing of the lease followed on 17th May 2021.
- The agreement reached will see a minimum initial investment of £1m, with a tapered support grant from the Parish Council of between 3 and 5 years. This should lead to a minimum saving of between £750k - £1m for the Parish on its current costs over 5 years, dependant on how quickly NEDDC can turn the loss around. The terms of the deal stipulate that the Parish Council will only provide support for a maximum of 5 years, if required after 3, with the new Community Hub being fully funded by NEDDC beyond that point.
- The agreement will also see the securing and refurbishment of the sports facilities, integration of the library, and the guarantee of being able to include youth provision in the forward thinking of the new Community Hub which the Parish has been missing for a while. The initiative will also see jobs secured, with further opportunities being opened over time.
- Discussions continue to take place between NEDDC and Derbyshire County Council (DCC) regarding the library and youth provision, looking at the new Community Hub format in more detail. The full vision will be shared with the public in due course, though we're mindful to note that the new facilities could introduce some extra benefits to residents such as a Café, children's soft play area and additional sports options. The Parish Council have requested that they remain involved in these discussions at all key points.

- As part of the lease, the Parish Suite is to remain under the management of the Parish Council and continue to be used for the benefit of the community with a full review to be undertaken shortly. It is anticipated that a refurbishment will be delivered to bring the facilities up to date and the tired interior refreshed. Additionally, we have secured the recently redundant Housing Office so that the Parish Council can be fully accessible to residents, something that was more difficult to access previously due to its location in the Sports Centre.
- The Parish Council envisages that we will move into the future with modernised facilities and the Community Hub will become a focal point for residents that is going to be purpose designed to support people of all ages as they grow and move through their lives.
- **Allotments**
A full review of Killamarsh's allotments has now been undertaken. All allotment holders and residents on the waiting list having been contacted, which has allowed for records to be updated and vacant plots to be let. This has now resolved many concerns of residents; particularly where certain plots have been under-maintained and given rise to other environmental issues. We have also:
 - 1) Allowed for the letting of 6 vacant allotments
 - 2) Combined the waiting list and after discussions the new combined list of 24 residents for both allotments sites, is actually down from 48. This will enable greater flexibility and choice and to ease administration
 - 3) Implemented a management review of the two sites, with a new monitoring plan and procedures put in place
 - 4) Reviewed policies to ensure standards are maintained and in line with the lettings, policy and tenants' agreements
- I would like to thank our officers for the hard work that has gone in to carry out the review.
- **Christmas Lights & Seasonal Fixtures**
Year on year the Parish Council have agreed to look at increasing the amount of funding for the village to support village amenities and improve the visibility of seasonal requirements.
- During December 2020 there was an increased investment in the Christmas lights and Christmas tree on the precinct, especially at a time when the village needed a boost due to COVID19 lockdowns and restrictions. I would like to thank the members and residents that were involved in this, they really brightened the village up. This was just a start and the Parish Council intends to do more.
- **Parish Land at Highmoor**
As residents will be aware, there was an ongoing situation at Highmoor where an application from a third party had been submitted to register ownership of a substantial piece of land that belonged to the Parish Council. This has now been resolved successfully and our legal representatives have been instructed to register the land in the Parish Councils name as although the Council holds the title deeds, it had not been previously registered with the Land Registry.
- **Planning**
The planning application for 50 houses on Primrose Lane has successfully been blocked by residents and the Parish Council working together and highlighting the risks of a development like this to the village, given its location on a greenfield site, near to a school on a busy road.
- We have continued to work with NEDDC on the local plan consultation and remain focused on protecting our green spaces and improvement of the local environment.
- **Birchlands Project**
The project is now well on target to be delivered in full and significant progress has been made to date. I would like to thank the Environment Committee members who have been involved in this project for the time and effort applied in delivering it successfully.
- **Summary of the Past Year**
Overall, the Parish Council have navigated an exceedingly difficult set of circumstances well by being organised and ready to tackle environmental changes very quickly. COVID19 has had a major impact on a number of Councils and this could quite easily have been the same for Killamarsh based on our challenging financial position we faced at the onset of the pandemic.
- The changes already made by the Council are a start, on a road to recovery for Killamarsh, and we are setting new foundations for the future. The leasing of the Sports Centre to NEDDC is a

major step forward, allowing us to focus on delivering more of the things that will make a difference to the village. We now find ourselves in a positive position that we can build on and I would like to thank every member of the Council and Officers who have been involved in this journey, this is all down to your dedication to make the village a better place to live.

- I'd like to acknowledge the stepping down of former Councillors Pat Bone, Kevin Bone and John Sharp for their efforts over the past two years and welcome new Councillors Wendy Tinley, David Drabble and Alex Platts to Killamarsh Parish Council.
- I'd also like to recognise the efforts of members of our community and businesses, most notably Killamarsh Friends in their support for the elderly in the early days of the pandemic, the Killamarsh Wombles for their relentless ongoing efforts to keep our village tidy, Killamarsh Conservation Group for bringing a bit of colour and sunshine to key areas of the village, the Killamarsh Heritage Society for keeping the memories alive for generations old and new and local businesses who have continued to provide the needs of the village from food to pharmacy requirements.
- **The Future**
The coming months will see the revitalisation of the sports centre, more engagement with the community and more focus on the things that people really want to take Killamarsh forward.
- We look forward to sharing updates about developments for Killamarsh from the Chesterfield Canal Trust and the focus on connectivity of Killamarsh with neighbouring towns and villages through our activities to try and improve public transport.
- We are also looking to update the Parish website to make this more accessible, more community events and activities to support the community and the ongoing improvement of our local amenities to provide for the future needs of Killamarsh.
- We'll also be keen to hear what our Parishioners want to see, as we move towards the future. The world is a little bit different now, but we still want to make Killamarsh a better place to work, play and live in.

The report was noted by the meeting.

5. Item 5: Section 137 Grant Applications (Feedback)

To receive grant funding feedback reports from grant applicants on how grant funding has been spent in accordance with the S137 Policy.

Killamarsh Conservation Group – Chairman read the report:-

'£200 had been paid for a skip from HR Skips for St Giles Churchyard on the basis of a 1 day hire. All waste was green and collected over several weekends. The skip was needed to get rid of bags of rubbish collected over this period. A second skip was purchased to collect further bags of rubbish also at a cost of £200. The operation had been a success and several memorials and gravestones were uncovered during the clearing of the Churchyard. The task was accomplished by 6 volunteers'.

Other groups did not submit a report or attend.

6. Item 6: Public Participation

To receive and consider any questions from members of the public who may raise issues, concerns or submit ideas for consideration by the Parish Council.

The following question was raised by a member of the public regarding the youth and library facilities:-

"Congratulations to the council for navigating the last 15 months. Thank you for the Chairmans report which was very comprehensive. Good to hear the chairman say that looking forward the council wishes to benefit the community. Last meeting Council expressed that they wished to schedule a meeting with the community to discuss the council's plans for the Youth of Killmarsh and to present these views to Derbyshire County Council. Has this meeting been scheduled? If not can the Parish Council set a meeting?"

Councillors agreed that more collaboration with residents was needed. It was reported that Youth and

Library sits with DCC and the forum for representing the views of the Parish is within them in their meetings. The Parish Council does not have the authority to be driving Youth and Library services. It was reported that representation really needs to be made to the District Councillors. Commitment was made to hold a residents meeting to put residents views to DCC. The council plans to hold a residents meeting but currently under the current Covid 19 restriction's we cannot do this due to limits on numbers and the Council would like to have full participation. It was felt that a meeting could be planned for after the 21st June.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the parish council considers scheduling a residents meeting, inviting District Representatives, County Councillors and Youth Club Representatives, before the next full council meeting on 28th June providing that the Covid restrictions are lifted on the 21st June.**

The following questions were received from Members of the Public:-

Since becoming aware that the council own the CLOC building, we would like to know when is something going to be done to ensure that the building is used for the benefit of the whole community, and not just at the whim of a few?

Question 1, When will the Parish confirm their tenants are legally entitled to occupy and administer the building?

When will the Parish endeavour to obtain a realistic rent for the building? Prior to confirmation that the Council own the building you charges a peppercorn ground rent. Now it's the land and building when are the council going to charge a more commercial rent?

The building has been boarded up for at least 5 years when it could have been made use of by a variety of community groups and organisations. Whenever use has been mentioned its always been a comeback that the CLOC is for 'EDUCATION' and cannot be used for anything else.

The constitution of KCT(A) can be shown more widely than that:-

Item 2(a)

"in a common effort to advance education ad ot provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants"

Item 2(b)

"establish, or secure the establishment of a COMMUNITY BUILDING (hereinafter called 'The TARDIS') and to maintain and manage the same.... In furtherance of these objects.

Ongoing efforts by the incumbents to the lease the building seem, if whispers and gossip are to be believed, to be related to bring youngsters into the community from a wide area, possibly even a different county, when our own kids have been left in limbo. This sounds very similar to an approach to Parish by County that was rejected with valid concerns for the community,

Somewhere in the council minutes I think I saw something about an approach for extra parking for the CLOC, which currently has 3 allocated spaces – how can this be entertained when there is such furore over the demolition of two community buildings for the purpose of creating car parking?

Derbyshire County Council vacated the building in 2016 but continued to pay rent until 2019. The terms of this agreement with DCC was that they continue to maintain the building, which did not happen. Killamarsh Community Trust have spent £17,000 on maintenance, air conditioning and new security etc. KCT could not go to an Estate Agent to try to obtain a new tenant until all the appropriate certification/H&S was in place. It took nearly a year due to covid etc to do this. Since then we have had several prospective tenants who would have been suitable and we are currently waiting for them to

come back to us as they have to research other factors first.

Parking spaces – 3 in the lease and we notify people of this when they are looking round. It would only be staff parking as the facility is predominantly going to be used by young people who would come by taxi or bus.

Rental is to be used for maintenance, after the building is maintained any surplus rent will be used for projects within the community as per the constitution, to ensure that the building is maintained.

Only Lilian who is a legitimate Trustee and bandied about that others have been added without the proper procedure. This will have been minuted, this should be available. KCT will check to find the minutes.

A lot of these questions are on the Killamarsh Voice over the last 2 years, suggesting that the Parish Council take KCT to court over these issues.

KCT went to a solicitor in Sheffield who said that it was not correctly set up initially.

Public felt that the community was not getting any value from the building.

CLlr Whitehead, currently no written record of Trustees being elected as these minutes have been requested several times in the past.

RESOLVED:

- 1) **That the parish meeting request Lilian/Sylvia to secure the minutes giving details of the election of Trustees to KCT.**

Library and Youth Council to be accommodated within the CLOC is a possibility.

Kevin email to N Challenger to pass these questions to SLYVIA and Lilian.

RESOLVED:

- 1) **That the response regarding the CLOC is considered to be added to the next parish council meeting agenda.**

The Meeting Closed at 7.07pm

These draft minutes were approved as a true record at the Annual Parish Meeting

Held on: *with the agreed additions/deletions: None / Yes (list amendments below)

Signed (Chair)..... Print: Dated

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*Loose leaf pages to be initialled

* The copy signed by the Chair to contain the alterations, recorded in longhand, with the changes (agreed by the meeting) signed and dated. Signed Copy of the minutes to be filed in the minute book.

***Agreed Amendments (Additions/Deletions) to the Draft Minutes:**