

THURSDAY, 09 JULY 2020

PAVENHAM COMMUNITY SUPPORT GROUP (PCSG) UPDATE

The PCSG is an informal group established in March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic to provide support services to Pavenham residents.

The PCSG comprises approximately 70 volunteers and is administered by Emma Pearce, Chrissie Holloway and Ian McKenzie.

The service infrastructure is based on Google and Whatsapp supported by a facebook group and central phone number. Fixed costs are not expected to exceed £150 per annum, the main cost being the virtual phone number supplied by the Number People phone line service . All other costs to date, such as printing, have been covered by donation.

An initial request was made that Parish Council make available a £500 emergency fund to cover fixed costs and hardship that may arise from volunteers completing tasks and not being recompensed for out of pocket purchases for residents. There has been no call for funds to cover volunteer expenses to date.

The PCSG continues to operate and is seen as a valued structure although demand for services has been low in the past month.

It is proposed that the PCSG should continue to exist through to March 2021 subject to a review by Emma, Chrissie and myself in October 2020. Any future role that the PCSG might play in supporting the community after COVID-19 will need to be considered as part of that review, including plans to close or suspend the PCSG.

The PCSG group requests the continued support of the Parish Council and that the £500 funding be kept available with a likely claim in the short-term of £150 for the Number People phone service.

Ian McKenzie

MONDAY, 06 JULY 2020

BACKGROUND

At the Parish Council meeting in MM 2019 the following responsibilities were agreed.

- Communications & Culture: PC newsletter, Website, Social media profiles, Cultural initiatives, Tourism – Andrew Senior
- Community records & the Environment: Assets of Community Value register, Ditches, ponds & drainage, Footpaths, Natural Habitats & SSSIs, Parish records, The Spinney & Trees – Chrissie Holloway
- Environmental Services: Bus shelters, Churchyard, Dog waste bins, Grass cutting & verges, Open spaces, Refuse collections, Rights of way, Signage, Telephone kiosk, Village historical archive, War memorial – Steve Rice
- Highways & Travel: Highway maintenance, Bus Services, Cycling, Speeding, Transport issues – Jim Russell
- Planning & Built Environment: Built Environment, Neighbourhood Plan, Planning – Brian Greenwood
- Welfare: Crime & Policing, Health & social welfare, Schools & young people, Village Hall & Playing Field – Jill Smith

ISSUE

Following my election as Chair I agreed to review the above responsibilities. Given that they were agreed relatively recently, I would seek to minimise any changes.

PROPOSAL

The responsibilities remain unchanged except for Thomas Beazley taking on responsibility for Environmental Services. I would be happy to continue to coordinate Litter Action in the village.

Steve Rice.

Working group meeting held 9th June to agree draft policies

This Zoom meeting started at 19.30 on 9th June. The purpose of this meeting was to agree content of numerous policies so they can be formally adopted during the full PC meeting to be held on 15th July 2020.

Present: Cllr. Steve Rice (Chair)
Cllr. Jill Smith
Cllr. Andrew Senior
Cllr. Chrissie Holloway
Cllr. Thomas Beazley
Cllr. Jim Russell

Following the Parish Council meeting of 27th May 2020, Cllr Senior was asked to re-write numerous draft policies using model documents issued by for example, NALC, wherever possible. Cllr Senior subsequently asked Louise Ashmore at BATPC to forward all such documents and Andrew used these to revise the initial documents. Where there appeared to be no model, Cllr Senior wrote a draft policy based upon any available guidance documents and the policies used in similar parishes.

This working party meeting was called in order to review these re-drafted policies, prior to formal ratification at the forthcoming Parish Council meeting to be held on 15th July 2020.

During this meeting, Cllr Beazley referred to a number of guidance notes or templates available through the NALC website Members section. Cllr Senior asked to be granted access so that he could confirm that the most up to date guidance had been followed.

<u>Policy</u>	<u>Statutory requirement?</u> <i>Template used?</i>	<u>Amendments to draft/Discussion outcomes</u>	<u>Review date</u>
Publication scheme	Yes <i>Information commissioners' office</i>	Agreed - see Track Changes for alterations	February 2021
Risk assessment register	Audit requirement <i>NALC JPAG template</i>	Cllr Rice agreed to cross check versus the previously agreed Financial Risk Assessment. Agreed - see Track Changes for alterations	Annual/ Feb 2021
Complaints <i>Action: Peter Sharpe (Clerk)</i>	NALC Best Practice <i>NALC guidance</i>	A discussion ensued about the need to have this policy. Cllr. Beazley and Cllr. Russell felt it was unnecessary and could make the PC vulnerable. Andrew said there was no firm model NALC document and cited other, local PCs (Bletsoe (2016), Carlton with Chellington (2019), Felmersham & Radwell (2020), Harrold (2018), Milton Ernest (2019), Oakley (pre-2018), and Thurleigh) which have this policy. Cllr Senior stated it was best practice to have a Complaints procedure,	May 2023

		and that the draft reflected both the guidance provided by NALC and the procedures of other councils. He stressed that the procedure document was about ensuring that there was a transparent procedure for making a complaint about the Council's actions, so that people knew both how to complain and what to expect, in terms of a fair and reasonable process. It was agreed that the Clerk would check with the insurers as to whether or not the PC should have this policy and to invite their comments on its contents.	
Expenses	NALC best Practice	Agreed - see Track Changes for alterations	May 2021
Equal Opps	BATPC Best Practice	A discussion ensued about the need to have this policy. Cllr. Senior agreed to look at the policy again and propose further changes to shorten the document. Agreed - see Track Changes for alterations	May 2023
Diversity	NALC Best Practice	Agreed - no changes made.	May 2024
Training and Development	NALC Fdtn. Award	A discussion ensued regarding the merit of ongoing training and whether it was necessary. It was decided to defer this policy for the time being.	May 2021
FOI	Referred to in SO <i>'Standardised form'</i>	See Track Changes	May 2021
Document retention or destruction Action = Cllrs Smith, Senior, Beazley	Statutory obligations SLCC guidance + Bedfordshire archive reqmts. See 4.4, 8.2	It was decided that Cllrs. Smith and Senior would work together to amend the length of time that certain documents would be retained. Cllr Beazley also feels that certain documents e.g. planning applications should be retained in excess of 6 years and the group agreed that the Parish Council should not be forced to destroy material which could be of practical or historic value. The changes reflect this.	May 2021
Press and media policy Action = Peter Sharpe (Clerk), Cllr Russell	Mentioned in SO	After some discussion it was agreed that the Chair should determine the content, but that the Clerk and the Councillor with responsibility for Communications should be party to that process, as set out in the policy. It was decided that the Clerk would send the final ratified policy to Helen Brown, editor of The Villager, for their	May 2023

		information. Jim is to send Andrew a written piece about the parking issues in Close Road.	
Investment strategy	Mentioned in Financial Regulations	Discussion postponed.	May 2021
Social media Action = Cllrs Senior, Smith		The meeting discussed the process for allowing comments on the website and Facebook page, i.e. that the comments would be moderated, and published if they clarified a point or created an opportunity to respond and thereby clarify a point. The policy has been updated to reflect this.	May 2023

Meeting ended 22.00

MONDAY, 06 JULY 2020

BACKGROUND [FROM VILLAGER UPDATE - MAY 2020]

“After many years debating with the Parish Council several schemes for slowing traffic passing through the village the Borough Council concluded the only effective method of slowing traffic would be the installation of average speed cameras. It recommended a three-camera scheme with one at each end of the High Street near the existing 30 mph signs with a third in the vicinity of the Church Lane junction. The Parish Council offered to contribute £10,000 to such a scheme and consequently the Borough Council made provision in its budget for a three-camera scheme for the village. The Parish Council has always felt that since all the village would have to pay towards any contribution to speed reduction measures then such measures should benefit as many residents as possible. To that end the Parish Council sought a 40 mph limit along the Straight and it funded the two flashing signs which have been erected along that stretch of road in order to help slow the traffic at the eastern end of the village. The Borough Council then put a halt on new average speed camera schemes because of constraints on its own budget. Those constraints have now been eased and the Borough Council has announced that is going ahead with a number of schemes across the Borough including the one for Pavenham.

The Parish Council has been discussing various schemes with Borough Council officers over recent months but has been unable to agree a suitable scheme within the budget that it has provided for Pavenham. The problem stems from its original recommendation for a three camera scheme which it now says would be ineffective because it claims that since traffic would tend to slow down in the centre of the village it will speed up as it approaches the end of the 30 mph limit. That view is contested by some councillors who believe drivers would not risk speeding up significantly for fear of being caught and they believe that three cameras positioned near the existing 30 mph limits would be effective. A problem has however arisen with such a scheme in that surveys have shown that the cost of providing electricity supplies to cameras at West End and in Church Lane near the church would be very high. The Borough Council has therefore proposed some alternative schemes including a two camera scheme at the eastern end of the High Street, a four-camera scheme -i.e two two-camera schemes - with a 20 mph limit in between the two sets of cameras in the centre of the village (with the Parish Council having to pay in the region of £35/40,000 for the fourth camera), extending the 30 mph limit along the Straight to the bend at East End with the stretch from the Church Lane junction to near Close Road controlled by a two-camera scheme, and flashing speed indicator signs in Church Lane and at West End if the cameras do not cover the whole of the 30 mph limit.

The Parish Council has asked the Borough for a firm written proposal with maps showing the locations of the proposed cameras. Whilst a two-camera solution is far from ideal, the Parish Council’s reserves will not currently cover the cost of the fourth camera. Councillors will have to weigh up the near-term advantages of having a two-camera system and the option to raise funds for the fourth, with the knowledge that the initial scheme will not cover the whole village.”

UPDATE

To be provided by Jon Abbott at the meeting.

PROPOSAL

That the Parish Council actively considers the Borough’s update, any contribution from Parish Council funds and the broader local government funding context.

Steve Rice – Chair.

Proposal for replacement community noticeboard for south end of The Bury

At present, there is a wooden noticeboard located adjacent to the cut through path (sometimes referred to as the Jitty Way) that runs from the south end of The Bury down onto the High Street. The houses closest to this noticeboard are #47, 48, and 49 The Bury, with #48 being the closest. It is 25+ years old and the local community uses it consistently and extensively.

The current board consists of several 12" parallel horizontal blockboard panels, with a wooden surround. There is no front panel and therefore no locking device. All notices posted are open to the elements. Over the years, the supporting surface has warped and the blockboard has disintegrated. It is often difficult to secure notices with drawing pins. Weathering and degradation of the surface means that notices increasingly blow off; they always get wet when it rains, ink runs etc.

The board is well used by the community and there are typically 6 – 8 notices upon it. These notices vary in size, usually being A4 with a few smaller. The current notices are typical and have been posted to display local events and products including Stevington Cinema, The Villager magazine, the weekly village walk and coffee event, PC agenda, Jon Abbott's BC coronavirus information phone line and pet products.

I am proposing that this board is replaced by a weatherproof, purpose made noticeboard, to be funded from Jon Abbott's Ward Fund monies held over from 2019/20. Numerous designs are available in oak, aluminium or stainless steel. Separate sections would enable the PC to have lockable access to one bay with the community retaining open access to the other(s).

I have obtained permission for a replacement noticeboard to be screwed to the brick wall of the nearby electrical substation.

At the next PC meeting, I would like the PC to agree the preferred option and enable me to submit the application to Jon Abbott.

What do we replace it with?

The current board provides space for 10 x A4 sheets if they are carefully placed immediately next to each other. I am proposing to replace this with something of similar capacity. All proposed boards are lockable but I am proposing that the replacement board remains unlocked. This would enable the local community to retain open access without having to go searching for a key. Open access would also ensure that notices could be displayed as the overall space permits as at present.

Proposed resolution

I would like the Parish Council to agree one of the two proposed boards so that I can put the proposal forward to Jon Abbott for approval.

	Noticeboards online Varicase/Church noticeboards 01539 – 628309 in Kendal Tom	Metrosigns 2000, Bedford 01234 – 351207 Jonathan
Orientation	Landscape, 2 sides each displaying up to 6 x A4 sheets	Landscape, 2 sides each displaying up to 6 x A4 sheets
Double door	Yes Product code = 6A4Px2	Yes Standard Plus Security noticeboard
External dimensions	1542 x 729	1585 x 785
Door viewing area	670mm wide x 624mm high	670mm wide x 630mm high
Butterfly locks fitted	Can provide a 'community twist lock' for open access. No key needed. No extra charge.	Yes, can be left in open position for public access or locked 'for private use' as lock turns or has a little key. No spare keys provided for butterfly locks. No extra charge (<i>this is my preferred option</i>)
Standard lock	Key lock doors, 2 keys provided	'Standard' locks available, with 2 keys per door as keys need to stay in to keep lock in open position. £5 per pair for extra keys.
Coloured finish	Satin silver or powder coated coloured finish. No extra charge.	Standard powder coating in either countryside green or black is included in price
Material used	Aluminium	Stainless steel
Glazing used	4mm UV grade polycarbonate	UV grade Polycarbonate 4mm, 10-year guarantee c. fogging
Top hinge fitted with stays?	Can be side or top – our choice. Quote is for top hinge with door stays Cost tbc	Stainless steel hinges, top hinged with two stays fitted per door
Internal board surface	Magnetic or felt inner panels Magnetic may be better than felt. Felt can absorb moisture on a wet day = condensation. Free magnets provided. No extra charge.	12mm cork faced MDF – this could be a problem
Delivery time	2 weeks	5 – 6 weeks
Guarantee	10 year	No formal guarantee, apart from UV polycarbonate
Delivery	Included	Could be collected
Price	£899 + VAT = £1078.80	£1098 + VAT = £1317.60
AOB	Installation now involves a frame into which the noticeboard fits. This avoids drilling into the noticeboard itself, which can weaken the board and introduce dampness.	Signs used in Oakley, Oakley Primary School, local Scout group, Beds Borough

Landscape orientation

Things Jill has done since the last PC meeting:

- Marked up the footpath maps of the Parish with the locations of bus stops and dog poo bins and returned to Peter
- Prepared and submitted the Ward Fund application for a replacement noticeboard for The Bury by requesting quotes from local and national manufacturers and consulting with local residents
- Contacted PC Dancer about suspicious cars in the Village Hall car park and alleged drug misuse
- Requested a place at a forthcoming Parish & Town Council Network virtual meeting in September 2020
- Cleared a length of the pavement adjacent to The Spinney of overgrowth (and threw a lot of debris into The Spinney which I know isn't ideal)
- Requested speed data from BBC
- Submitted Minutes (11th June) arising from for the working group's Zoom meeting to discuss draft policies
- Wrote 250 words for the newsletter about the noticeboard application and submitted to Andrew

Report to the Parish Council meeting on 15 July 2020

Since the Parish Council meeting on 27 May, in undertaking my responsibilities, I have continued to focus on ensuring that the Parish Council's website is fit for purpose and contains and presents relevant information in an accessible form, to facilitate greater transparency.

As I explained in my previous report, content had been migrated across, by Eyelid, from the old website, in accordance with the agreement with them. Unfortunately, the lockdown hit before the training to use the WordPress-based site could be rolled out, so the Parish Clerk hasn't, as yet, been trained to use it. Fortunately, I have used WordPress-based sites before, and consequently took on the role of making changes to the standardised structure to ensure that the website is an effective tool for communication, both of the Parish Council's activities and its structure, rules and purpose. I believe, and feedback from local residents, tells me that the inclusion of this content (for example, a description of the role of Parish Councillors and the Clerk) has been enlightening and allowed them to better understand the role of the Council and its wider remit.

There has been no negative feedback about the new website, which has been addressed directly to me or indirectly through third parties, including other councillors.

On-going issues of missing data

However, there is significant information still missing from the site, despite my persistent requests for the Clerk to provide me with this. Currently, the site does not provide access to:

- Minutes:
 - 2020
 - 22 April
 - 2019
 - 14 November
 - 25 September
 - 2016
 - 16 November
 - 22 September
- Agendas:
 - all 33 meetings from and including 15 May 2014 to 9 May 2019
- Accounts:
 - The information has not been presented in a consistent manner over the years, which makes it hard to track the Council's performance, and fails the test of transparency. Having discussed this issue with the Chair, and given his experience of these matters, it is necessary now to present, each year, in a consistent format. I propose that we agree that the following documentation be presented and published on the website as standard. We also need, in each case to agree due dates in each year by which they must be published to set an appropriate standard for the Clerk to work to:
 - Initial budget and reserve forecast
 - Approved Risk Assessment
 - Full year actual income and expense -v- agreed budget
 - Accounts
 - Schedule of Assets
 - Notice of Audit

- Annual internal audit report
- Annual external auditor's report and certificate
- Annual Governance statement
- Notice of Appointment of date for the Exercise of Public Rights
- Notice of conclusion of the audit
- Given the above, the following are missing:
 - 2020/21
 - Initial budget and reserve forecast
 - Approved Risk Assessment
 - In the past, as I have indicated above, the information presented doesn't appear to have always met the statutory minimum/standard appropriate for transparency. This is what is currently on the website and the gaps are clear and must be filled as a matter of genuine urgency.
 - 2019/20
 - Financial Risk Assessment
 - No other documents – I assume that we should have the Notice of Appointment of date for the exercise of public rights in place by now.
 - 2018/19
 - Accounting Statement
 - Income and Expenditure accounts
 - Annual Governance Statement
 - Annual Internal Audit Report
 - External Audit Report and Certificate
 - Notice of appointment of date for the exercise of public rights: 21 June 2019 to 1 August 2019.
 - Schedule of Assets
 - But these are missing:
 - Initial budget
 - Financial Risk Assessment
 - Notice of conclusion of the audit
 - 2017/18
 - Annual Internal Audit report, Annual Governance Statement, Annual External Auditor Report and Certificate, Accounting Statements, and Internal Auditor Report and Certificate (presented as one document)
 - External Auditor Report and Certificate
 - Income and expenditure accounts
 - Notice of conclusion of the audit
 - Schedule of Assets
 - But these are missing:
 - Initial budget
 - Financial Risk Assessment
 - Full year actual income and expense -v- agreed budget
 - Notice of Appointment of date for the Exercise of Public Rights
 - for 2016/17, 2015/16, and 2014/15 all documents are missing.
 - Parish Meeting minutes:
 - None provided as yet, required from June 2014 onwards
 - Parish Meeting agendas:

- None provided as yet, required from June 2014 onwards

The original request for these documents was sent on **25 April 2020**. This is now one day short of **11 weeks ago**. Despite repeated requests, the documents listed above are still outstanding, and the Clerk has not even bothered to reply to my requests for them to be forwarded. I believe the Parish Council understands the public's right to access to this information, and the Clerk must be tasked with providing this information before the end of July 2020, three months is more than enough time to do this in.

I have also asked the Clerk to provide copies of Annual Reports and Newsletters, dating back to 2014, but these remain gaps on the website.

The other major gap on the website relates to the Neighbourhood Plan. At present, the site tells the story that nothing has happened on the Neighbourhood Plan for two years. I am assured that things have been happening but, despite requesting them and an overhaul of the narrative describing the Neighbourhood Plan process, nothing has been forthcoming. What is published on the site, is what was on the old site, having been transferred by Eyelid. I am told that some data must have been lost in the transition, but nobody has produced that data. There was a somewhat abrupt suggestion that all the data should be taken down because it would compromise the Neighbourhood Plan process, but when I asked for specifics – both in terms of which data and how it would compromise the Plan – I received no response. Consequently, as what is on the site was previously there, I cannot see any reason for taking the information down.

Subscriptions to the site

There are now 70 subscribers to the website, i.e. 70 recipients of the weekly (Friday evening at 20:00) newsfeed of all posts on the website.

The rate of subscription has, however, slowed down over the past few weeks:

- To the end of April, there had been 23 subscriptions
- By the end of May, there were 61 subscriptions, an increase of 38
- By the end of June, there were 69 subscriptions, an increase of 8
- On 9 July there are 70 subscriptions, an increase of 1

Most subscribers appear to be village residents, but this is not a straightforward analysis as the only data collected is email addresses. The data suggests that approximately 20-25% of village households now receive the newsfeed each week.

The Clerk has held, since the handover from Eyelid, posters advertising the website. I have asked him to put these up several times, but I don't believe that it has happened. Obviously, publication and circulation of a Newsletter, door-to-door, would help us to drive subscription, perhaps allowing us over time to not have the cost of printing the newsletter.

Further developments to the website

As I reported in May, I would like to add a new section in which the key issues affecting the village can be more clearly aired, meaning that villagers do not have to work through the minutes to work out what is going on. I would suggest that this section addresses issues of concern to the village, as identified by Parish Councillors and the questions that are being asked of them. Immediately, I can see that this would include:

- Speed cameras and speed management in the village;
- The public footpath's potential closure between Pavenham and Stevington, because of issues relating to its maintenance;
- The parking problems on Close Road and at the top of Mill Lane;

Obviously, most of these are longstanding issues and on-going problems that it is taking significant time to resolve, but these are matters that concern villagers, for which the Council is responsible and I think we should use the website to communicate what is happening to residents and keep them up to speed with developments.

Newsletter

I've today written to Councillors asking them for content for the Newsletter. I would like to receive this in advance of the meeting but, if not, we will have to agree a procedure for the content to be produced. Given that it is now six months since the last newsletter, we do need to get one out.

If agreement can't be reached, I suggest that we have an immediate production with:

- the former Chair's report,
- a report from the new Chair,
- a feature about the Pavenham Support Group's work,
- a feature about the website and subscription,
- information about the Ward Fund (soliciting ideas from parishioners) including advice about the noticeboards,
- information about the grant-making procedure,
- information about PC meetings and the ability to digitally participate, together with the possibility that we will be able to undertake hybrid meetings in the future (see below).

Shared Cloud storage space

At the last meeting I agreed to suggest a secure Cloud Storage Space that the Parish Council could use to circulate large and private documents between Councillors and with the Clerk. There was a reluctance, on the part of some Councillors, to use Dropbox.

Having looked at a range of possible options, including: amazondrive, Blomp, Box, CertainSafe, Degoo, GoogleDrive, IDrive, Icedrive, Jumpshare, Letsupload, MediaFire, Mega, Microsoft OneDrive, myDrive, OneDrive, pCloud.com, SugarSync, Sync, Tresorit, Tencent Cloud, Yanbdex Disk, Zoolz – there are a lot!

My recommendation is that we use [Sync.com](https://sync.com). My second choice would be [Tresorit](https://tresorit.com), which is based in Switzerland.

Sync.com is viewed as one of the most secure Cloud-based systems and provides 14GB of free storage space. More and greater functionality can be purchased but certainly, at the moment, it should be enough.

There's no need to download the app onto your computer, you can run and access it from the Cloud, on a desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile phone (though I wouldn't recommend the latter for reading lengthy documents). Once you're registered on the site, files are easy to upload, and then easily shared, simply by sending an email to the person you want to share the document with.

Sync.com is a Canadian company and based in Canada, which means that the security surrounding it is closer to our own English laws, than the laws in the US.

I would suggest that the Clerk register for the Parish Council, create an initial shared folder, and then add each of us (giving us access to the folder) by sending us an email from Sync.com.

I do, however, want to suggest one security adjustment. If anybody else has access to your email, you should use an @pavenham-pc.gov.uk email address, because otherwise the security of the system is potentially compromised.

Hybrid PC meetings

Given the high level of participation in digital Parish Council meetings by parishioners, and given that the nights are now beginning to draw in, it was interesting to note that NALC is suggesting that hybrid – physical and digital - parish council meetings are already legal, and that these may be the *modus operandi* for parish councils in the future. Obviously, as people have become used to using digital devices they have become more confident and at ease, and I can readily imagine that elderly residents in the village, for example members of the WI which now holds its meetings only in the afternoons to avoid bring out members at night, would appreciate being able to participate in this way. The NALC report is attached.

It strikes me that when we meet, given that people will remain nervous until a vaccine is available, it would be wise to shift Parish Council meetings into the Main Hall at the Village Hall, where social distancing will be possible.

Consequently, I want to propose that the Parish Council moves to adopt hybrid meetings as the norm, as a way to extend opportunities for participation to village residents. This will require adjustments to the Standing Orders, possibly a shift to using the Main Hall rather than Committee Room, and the purchase of new kit, but the costs should not be significant.

Cllr. Andrew Senior

9 July 2020

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CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Planning and preparation	4
Council discussions and voting	5
Public participation	6
Managing risks	7
After the meeting	8
Hybrid meetings	8
Remote meeting platforms	12
Remote meeting platforms security	15
Telephone conferencing providers	16

FOREWORD

On 4 April 2020, the government brought The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 into force to allow local authorities to conduct meetings remotely until May 2021. NALC has produced a legal briefing with our interpretations of the regulations which can be accessed in the member's area of our website.

This guide has been produced by NALC to support local (parish and town) councils to be able to conduct their meetings in this new way. The guidance does not cover the full range of information and legislation required to hold a lawful council meeting, it solely looks the issues related to remote or hybrid meetings. For further information on council meetings more generally NALC and county association member councils have access to a range of legal topic notes and guidance. For more information contact your local county association.

This publication was first produced on 3 April 2020 and was updated on 29 June 2020.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

This is very likely to be the first time your council has tried holding meetings remotely, and so planning and preparation will be key. Ideally, your aim should be for councillors and staff to be entering your first remote council meeting with confidence and clarity about how the meeting will run. The clerk should make arrangements in advance or the council may wish to consider setting up a small working group. Below you will find some issues to consider.

Which platform to use

The remote meeting platforms section of this guide (see page eight) provides a list of platforms that are available and may be good options for council meetings. This list is not exhaustive and it's worth spending a bit of time considering different options. One factor that may affect your choice is the technology available to councillors and staff (e.g. if not everyone has a computer/laptop then you will want to pick a platform that allows individuals to join by telephone).

What investment might be needed?

It is possible to hold remote meetings at no cost to the council. Most platforms offer some free option for holding meetings. However, for a small investment you may be able to access additional functions that the council may feel are good value. For example, most platforms impose a time limit on their free accounts that may be difficult for council meetings to adhere to.

On top of the potential cost of the meeting platform itself, you may wish to consider investment in hardware. For example, if some councillors do not have access to a laptop the council may consider purchasing this equipment. You should also consider individuals with specific needs (e.g. if someone has a hearing impairment then certain headphones may help them hear the meetings better). As part of your preparations you should contact councillors and staff to find out what technology they do have access to and any concerns or needs that they have.

Any spending decisions will have to be made by the council bearing in mind your budget and ability to incur such costs. It is also worth remembering that this is only a temporary situation and at some point we will return to holding face-to-face meetings again. Large investments would not be advisable if they won't have long term benefits.

Holding a practice meeting

Practice makes perfect – and this is particularly true when trying something new. If possible it is worth holding a practice meeting with all councillors and staff so that you can work out any technical issues and to see if your approach to voting and discussions does work for everyone. You may then need to go back to amend your proposed approach and even try a second practice before the 'real' council meeting.

Holding practice meetings might feel like an extra demand on everyone's time, but it will be much easier to work out bugs and issues in advance than to be struggling with them during the council meeting itself. How frustrating would it be

to discover that you are not able to hold the council meeting due to technical difficulties you could have resolved in advance?

Once these practical issues have been resolved attention will then need to turn to how you will conduct the meeting itself. This is covered in the following sections. Once those issues have been considered you will then need to decide if any written guidance for the council would be useful. This might be an addendum to your standing orders explaining how these will be interpreted, or a less formal document that lays out how the meeting will run.

COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS AND VOTING

In general you should try and keep to your usual approach to meetings and stick to your standing orders as much as you can. The council should remember this is a usual council meeting. You should consider in advance how you will manage discussions and voting to allow the meeting to run as smoothly as possible.

Council discussions

The chairman of the council should still chair the meeting. They should take the opportunity of any practice meetings to ensure they are confident following the agenda, managing input from councillors and staff, and keeping the meeting to time. Some suggestions to aid this are:

- Asking everyone to mute themselves when not speaking - this helps keep background noise to a minimum which will improve everyone's ability to hear the discussions.
- If everyone is able to join by video then they could raise their hands when they wish to speak.
- If some people cannot join by video then raising hands will not be an option. It also will make it harder to keep track of who is speaking. In this scenario, the chairman could ask people to state clearly when they would like to speak. The risk with this is that people may wish to speak at the same time and so speak over one another, but in a small group this may be manageable. Another option might be for the chair to read from a list of councillors names and ask them in turn if there is anything they wish to say or ask. This may take more time but allows for a more controlled approach.
- The chairman may ask everyone to state their name before they start speaking so that it is always clear who is speaking.
- How will you keep track of who is 'present'? It may be the case that some individuals have technical issues that mean that they 'leave' the meeting, for example their internet connection means that they are cut off. Some platforms are very clear on who is present, some are less clear. If you are not sure you would be aware of anyone accidentally dropping out of the meeting you might wish to do a quick 'roll call' before each item to ensure you are able to accurately minute who was present.

Voting

There is no 'right way' to conduct voting in a remote meeting. You will have to find an approach that works best for the council. Some things to consider are:

- Will everyone be joining by video? If so then you could raise hands to vote as in a physical meeting.
- If you will not be able to see everyone then of course raising hands will not work. In this case you might do a roll call of councillors names and ask them to state their vote. Some platforms may allow other methods of voting eg stating a vote in a 'chat' function. Whatever method you choose, you should consider this in advance of the meeting and ideally practice it in advance too.
- You might also consider asking the chairman or clerk to read back the votes of the council so that everyone is sure their vote has been recorded correctly.
- Make sure every vote, whether visually or by telephone, is clear and unambiguous.

Behaviours and conduct

It is worth remembering that the required standards of behaviour and discussion are the same whether in remote or face-to-face meetings. These are difficult times and people may be worried about their health or family members, they may be frustrated being isolated at home, and there may be challenges with using new technology particularly if there are technical difficulties. Everyone in the meeting will need to be respectful and compassionate towards one another, emotions may be higher than usual but that only makes it more important that everyone approaches the meeting with respect and in the spirit of the council's code of conduct.

Declaring Interests

The council will need to consider how they will manage councillors 'leaving' a meeting if they have an interest and do not wish to be part of the meeting, particularly if they consider there will be negative public perception if they remain. It may be that the councillor with an interest, leave the meeting but agree, with the chairman a time to return to the meeting. Should the council need further time on a matter, another agreed time frame can be given.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Council meetings must still be advertised and the public have a right to observe. Local councils can put instructions for how to join the meeting within the meeting advertisement and papers. The aim should be to allow and encourage public access to meetings as much as possible, in the same way as the council would have done for physical meetings.

If you would normally allow public questions or input in your meeting then it is worth trying to keep this approach with remote meetings too. The public still have the right to record meetings, it is for the council to decide whether or not to allow members of the public to access a recording functionality provided by the meeting platform or not.

Different platforms have different options for how this can be achieved. Some allow the audience to speak whenever they wish, whereas others, give the council more control over who can speak when. It's worth keeping in mind that there is

the same risk of disruption to a normal council meeting as there is for a remote meeting. So it may not be necessary to be able to control the public's ability to speak, it is likely they will follow the rules of the meeting as they usually do. The chair or clerk should also take a note who wishes to speak, from the public, to ensure that no one is missed out. This is key in rural areas with poorer broadband capacities, which can cause people to 'leave' meetings accidentally due to signal strengths.

If there are parts of the agenda that are confidential then you will need to ask the public observers to leave as you normally would. If you fear there is a risk of people accidentally joining the confidential item you might consider setting up a different meeting ID/log in that is not shared with the public for that item. Some platforms also allow meetings to be password protected.

If you do have members of the public attending then take some time at the beginning of the meeting to explain to them how the meeting will run and how and when they can speak. This will help manage their expectations.

MANAGING RISK

There is often concern about additional risks of holding meetings remotely, some issues you may wish to consider are:

Which platform to use

Different platforms have different approaches to managing your data, including the content of your meetings. It is worth doing some research into any platform before making any decisions. In general, it is best to go with well-known brands as they will have the reputation and infrastructure to minimise any risks. You should then spend time learning about your chosen platform's settings that will help you manage your risks, many platforms provide a range of information online to help you do this. Information on some security settings for different meeting platforms is provided later in this guide. The National Centre for Cyber Security (NSCS) has a range of information on their website (www.ncsc.gov.uk) to help choose, configure and deploy video conferencing services.

How to minimise risk of cyber attack

There are a number of ways that malicious individuals or hackers might put your meeting and those attending at risk:

- Meeting bombing — This occurs when an uninvited guest joins a video conferencing meeting either to listen in on the conversation or to disrupt the meeting by sharing inappropriate media. These attacks are rare but there are simple steps to minimise the risk such as requiring a password to join a meeting, checking all the participants are invited, or if members of the public are attending you might ask everyone to share their names at the beginning of the meeting. You should also check your settings in your meeting platform to make sure participants cannot share links or files.
- Malicious links — If attackers gain access to your meeting room, they might trick participants into clicking on malicious links shared via the chat. To reduce the risk of this you might wish to disable the chat function or you

could also brief all attendees in advance that no web links should be shared or clicked on from the chat.

- File sharing — We should always be cautious when opening files whether by email or download, and this is just as true in an online meeting. Staff and councillors and other attendees should be advised to only open files from trusted sources and never to share or download files during an online meeting.
- Malware attack — Malware, or malicious software, is any program or file that is harmful to a computer user. The steps above will reduce the risk of any malware attack, but having up to date anti-virus software is also important. Not just for the official council equipment but for any equipment councillors or staff use for council business.

You should consider having a plan in place for what to do if you suspect your meeting is compromised or at risk in any way. This would include being clear who would be responsible for monitoring any chat text, who has the permissions to remove individuals and under what circumstances would it be appropriate to stop the meeting if people are at undue risk. This might sound daunting but this is comparable to a risk assessment you might carry out for a physical meeting where the council would consider individual's health and safety and what to do in case of an emergency.

AFTER THE MEETING

Minute taking should be done as usual with the clerk seeking clarity at any point, should it be needed. The minutes should be agreed at the next meeting and can always be retrospectively signed at the next face-to-face meeting.

Once you have held your first remote council meeting it is worth taking a little time to reflect on how it went and what you might wish to change or improve for next time.

HYBRID MEETINGS

At the time of writing this guidance, NALC strongly advises local councils to continue to meet remotely, without the need for face to face contact, for the present time. However, with lockdown restrictions beginning to ease it is worth starting to think ahead to when local councils may be able to start holding in-person meetings again. This section will describe what councils must take into consideration when planning for how to hold council meetings in future, plus some practical steps to hold effective hybrid meetings.

What do the regulations allow?

When in-person meetings are once again permitted, the regulations offer a great deal of flexibility for how a council may wish to manage attendance. A council could:

- Hold a fully remote meeting — this is where all staff, councillors and members of the public attend through an online or teleconferencing platform. Where a council wishes to hold a fully remote meeting there is no

obligation to make provision for in-person attendance by members of the council or members of the public and press at any specific location.

- Hold a fully in-person meeting — this is where all staff, councillors and members of the public join the meeting in person at a place determined by the council. Where a council wishes to hold a fully in-person meeting and specifies a physical place as the location of the meeting in the meeting notice there is no obligation to make provision for remote attendance by members of the council or members of the public and press.
- Hold a hybrid meeting — this is where some people attend in person and others join remotely. The council would need to make a decision on both the location of the physical meeting, plus the method through which others could join remotely. The council has no obligation to provide any specific types of remote access, this would be a council decision.

What else should we consider?

The list above shows the high degree of autonomy that councils have, until May 2021, in how it conducts its meetings. However, there are a number of other issues the council should take into account:

- Accessibility — the risk of COVID19 impacts on some groups more than others. In particular, those over 70 or with certain underlying health conditions will still be at greater risk from the illness even as lockdown restrictions ease. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on local councils to make reasonable adjustments in respect of disabilities, including making reasonable adjustments for disabled councillors. Local councils are also subject to the public sector equality duty and have a duty to take into account the need to eliminate discrimination.
- Inclusivity — there are a number of people who may have been affected by the current situation in other ways. For example, those with childcare or other caring responsibilities may not have access to the services and support they usually have, or people's working hours may have changed as many employers are bringing in new shift patterns. You should take care when considering future council meetings that they at times, places, or using online tools, that do not exclude specific groups of people more than others.
- Openness and transparency — many councils have reported an increase in public engagement with local council meetings that are held online. This uptake in democratic engagement is to be celebrated and the council may wish to take into consideration how it can maintain this new interest.

Planning for future council meetings

The council may wish to start planning for how it will undertake council meetings as lockdown restrictions ease. Some steps you might include in that planning process are:

- Needs assessment — the council might conduct a survey of staff and councillors to understand their needs and wishes. If there are members of the public, or key groups who regularly attend meetings it might be helpful to engage with them as well to understand their needs and preferences.

- Allocating a budget — the council may, or may not, have some budget they can set aside to support hybrid meetings. It is advisable to make this decision taking into account that the current regulations are in force until May 2021, so large investments may not be advisable for what may be a short term arrangement for the council. On the other hand, there may be some investments that the council considers good value for money as they may be able to use the tools in future in other ways, for example upgrading to a conference phone might seem a good investment if the council is confident it will make use of this beyond council meetings.
- Risk assessment — local councils must follow the Government's 'safer workplaces' guidance before deciding to return to in-person meetings. This includes conducting a risk assessment and considering what precautions can be taken to manage risks. The council might consider:
 - Providing hand sanitiser to those entering the meeting room.
 - Staggering arrival times for staff, councillors and members of the public.
 - Ensuring seating is placed at least 2-metre apart.
 - Asking people to wear face masks.
 - Holding paperless meetings.
 - If papers are provided, people should be discouraged from sharing with others to minimise how many people handle the papers.
 - Arranging seating so people are not facing each other directly.
 - Choosing a venue with good air flow, including opening windows and doors where possible.
- Equipment — does the council have the right tools to allow meetings to run effectively in the way that is being planned for? For example, if you plan for the Clerk to both take notes and manage online interaction can they do that from a single laptop?
- Practice — hybrid meetings can be more complicated than pure in-person or pure remote meetings and so practice sessions to test equipment and voting procedure is advisable.

How to hold a hybrid meeting

There are a wide variety of ways in which a council might hold a hybrid meeting. This is a new way of working for the sector and there are no right or wrong ways of approaching this. A lot will depend on your particular circumstances. The key goals for council meetings should be:

- Lawful decision making.
- Discussion that is accessible to as wide a range of people as possible.
- Open to democratic engagement from the public and other stakeholder.

The information below aims to help you consider how to approach this for your council through a number of possible scenarios:

Scenario A

The council conducted an audit of councillor needs and identified that 2 out of 10 councillors will not be able to join in-person council meetings for the foreseeable future. Council staff are able to join meetings in person. The chair of the local

neighbourhood community group – the only group that regularly attends council meetings – also felt their members would be able to join meetings in person.

The council decides to purchase a conference phone for under £100. This has reasonable quality speakers and microphone so that the councillors joining remotely can hear the councillors' discussion in the room, and they can also be heard reasonably well. During each agenda item the Chairman checks that the councillors attending remotely have understood the discussion and asks if they would like to make any contribution. During voting the Chairman asks the councillors on the phone to state their vote out loud.

The councillors sometimes cannot hear contributions from members of the public as they are further away from the phone speaker, however the chairman ensures that key points for discussion are either re-stated so that they can be heard, or these points are communicated via email after the meeting so that they can be followed up after wards. Councils should note that decisions cannot be made by email.

Scenario B

Since lockdown there have been a number of councillors who do not have access to laptops or broadband and so have not been able to take part in remote meetings. There have also been complaints from a number of members of the public who, due to poor broadband in the village, have not been able to view council meetings.

The council conducts a risk assessment and agrees that the village hall can be used for a meeting. The Councillors and Clerk arrive early to give time to set up. They place hand sanitiser at the entrance, place signs reminding people to keep 2m apart, and place chairs for observers spaced at least 2m apart. They use a computer monitor that the council already owned so that the councillors and public can see those joining remotely and councillors attending remotely can be seen and heard. The council has purchased a Bluetooth speaker and microphone for under £200 to ensure better audio quality for everyone, plus a webcam for under £100. Previous practice runs have shown that this allows a reasonable view of the room.

The chairman is joining remotely and hosts the meeting as usual, taking time in each agenda item to check everyone can see and hear to a reasonable level

Scenario C

This large town council has been very pleased with the uptake in public viewing of council meetings online. In general, council meetings have operated effectively remotely but the Chairman and Clerk have reflected that they have found it difficult running the meetings, particularly during more complex agenda items.

The council invests up to £5,000 on equipment including a number of monitors, cameras and speakers in the council chamber. This means that the council can now live stream meetings on Facebook, where they know a large number of local residents like to engage with the council. The council aims to continue to live stream meetings long into the future, plus are confident the equipment will allow them to generate increased income from venue hire. The Clerk and Chairman go

in-person to all council meetings which has helped them be able to work together to manage meetings. Councillors can choose whether to join in person or remotely and are asked to confirm this with the Clerk at least a week in advance if possible. One councillor has a hearing impairment and so council staff have been engaging with the councillor to ensure that the new equipment works appropriately with a hearing loop and to offer support, alongside a new accessibility budget, to make sure they are able to engage with meetings fully

Further tips for hybrid meetings

- Just because you can go back to in person meetings does not mean you have to. Take the time to consider your options as a council and to undertake any risk assessments.
- The role of chairman in a hybrid meeting will be more complex than in pure in-person or remote meetings. It will take time to get used to this new way of holding meetings so support for the chairman such as practice sessions, extra preparation with staff in advance of the meetings, and patience in meetings will all help aid the transition.
- If there is a confidential agenda item on the agenda it will be important to check all methods of joining the meeting have been correctly managed. For example, it would be an easy mistake to forget to ask members of the public joining remotely to leave the meeting as they are not as easily visible as those in the room. Take the time to check only the correct councillors and staff are present before conducting any confidential business.
- If considering spending on new technology, shop around. There are a lot of options at different price points. Don't rush into a decision.
- Double check the returns policy of anything purchased. If you find the new equipment is not to your needs you will be disappointed if you find you cannot return it.
- Don't aim for perfection — the key aim is to find a solution that allows councillors to hear, or to see and hear, and take part in discussion. It may not allow the full interaction that the council is used to, but you will need to find compromises depending on your council's budget and resources.
- You do not need to use the same solution for all meetings. For example you may choose to hold full council meetings in person, but continue to hold committees remotely.

REMOTE MEETING PLATFORMS

In this section you will find a range of meeting platforms with their advantages and disadvantages along with any pricing information to help your council make a decision on the best platform to use.

Google Hangouts

<https://hangouts.google.com>

This is a communication platform that can be used for messaging, video conferencing and calls. The Classic Google Hangouts is free. Google Hangouts Meet is Google's paid video conferencing software — find out more at https://gsuite.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/pricing.html

Advantages:

- It can be used on multiple devices including computers/laptops, Android and Apple devices.
- Screen sharing options are available.
- Participants can use the chat option whilst on the video call.

Disadvantages:

- For video conferencing there is a limit of up to 25 participants.
- Participants must have a Gmail account.

GoToMeeting

<https://www.gotomeeting.com/en-gb>

This is HD video conferencing software that can be used for meetings and collaboration. Find out more about pricing at <https://www.gotomeeting.com/en-gb/meeting/pricing-ma>

Advantages:

- Meetings can be scheduled in advance.
- Invitations can be integrated with Office 365 or Google Calendar plugins.
- Participants can join meetings through 'call me' option
- GoToMeeting can automatically call participants.
- Screen sharing options are available.
- Can host meetings with up to 250 participants.
- Meetings can be recorded and meeting transcripts can be shared.

Disadvantages:

- The platform requires fast internet connection.
- Older systems may struggle to operate GoToMeeting.
- There are limitations with the free version — meetings can last 40 minutes and include three participants.

Microsoft Teams

<https://products.office.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

This is a collaboration and conversational platform as part of Office 365. Find out more about pricing at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/business/compare-more-office-365-for-business-plans>

Advantages:

- Within meetings you can share screens and record your meeting.
- Participants can join meetings, without joining Teams by clicking on the email link.
- Previous meeting notes and recordings can be accessed.
- The platform allows for 250 participants.

Disadvantages:

- The maximum PowerPoint size is 2GB.
- There are limited features on the Microsoft Teams free platform compared to the paid Microsoft Teams. More information is available on Microsoft Support.

Skype

<https://www.skype.com/en>

This is an online communications tool that can be used with PC/laptop, mobile phone, tablet or web. Skype has HD voice and video calling which helps to host group meetings. Skype can also be used for instant messaging. Skype is free however calls to mobile or landline incurs a charge.

Advantages:

- Screen share is available, which can be used for PowerPoints, videos, pictures and on screen calls.
- You can save calls and record your screen.
- Conversations can be protected with end to end encryption.
- Skype can be used to reach those without skype using telephone calling services.

Disadvantages:

- There is a limit of 49 people joining group calls
- Skype provides limited customer support.

Slack

<https://slack.com/intl/en-gb>

This is a collaboration hub which provides an alternative to email communication. It can be used for conversations as well as voice or video calls. Find out more about pricing at <https://slack.com/intl/en-gb/pricing>

Advantages:

- Screen sharing options are available.
- Slack operates using channels which helps bring everything together in one place, such as documents and conversations.
- Joining and starting calls is fairly straightforward.
- Slack is known to be a secure platform for calls.

Disadvantages:

- Slack has limitations with how many people can join a call. This is up to 15 people using the paid standard package.
- There is a limitation to how many features are available on the free version.

Zoom

<https://zoom.us>

This is a video conferencing platform. This can be used for meetings, collaborations and participants can also use the chat option. It also supports audio conferencing, allowing people to join by telephone as well. Find out more about pricing at <https://zoom.us/pricing>

Advantages:

- Participants can share screens with each other (e.g. share a PowerPoint presentation).
- Meetings can be made securely. This includes having passwords and meeting IDs for participants to join meetings.
- Meeting invitations can be added to Outlook Calendar, Google Calendar or Yahoo Calendar.
- You can save the chat conversations.
- Meetings can also be recorded for future reference.

Disadvantages:

- The level of support you can receive from Zoom is dependent on the Zoom package being used.
- The free Zoom package limits group meetings to 40 minutes.

REMOTE MEETING PLATFORMS SECURITY

Dependant on the remote meeting platform you choose, there are specific settings that can be used, to make your meeting more secure. Some of the advice is applicable to pre meeting arrangements, whilst others are applicable during the meeting.

Google Meet

<https://support.google.com/a/answer/7582940?hl=en>

- Meeting codes are set up, in a way to eliminate hacking.
- Restrictions can be applied for joining video meetings and participants joining via telephone.
- Disruptive behaviour within the meeting can be addressed using moderator controls such as muting or removing a participant.
- Accounts can be made more secure using two-step verification.

GoToMeeting

<https://blog.gotomeeting.com/5-best-practices-staying-secure-gotomeeting>

- Meetings can be password protected.
- Meeting organisers can control access to the meeting.
- Meeting lock is a feature that can prevent unexpected participants from joining the meeting.

- The waiting room function is enabled once the meeting is locked. Should you choose to unlock the meeting, any unwanted participants can be removed.

Microsoft Teams

<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/teams-security-guide#addressing-threats-to-teams-meetings>

- Using the lobby function, there are option to control who joins the meeting.
- Having a structured meeting enables presenters to have control over what participants can do during the meeting.

Zoom

<https://zoom.us/security>

- Meetings can be password protected.
- Meetings can be secured with encryption.
- Settings can be enabled requiring the host to be present before meetings can start.
- The waiting room feature can be enabled, allowing only the host to admit participants.
- Meetings can be locked.
- The meeting host has a number of controls including the ability to control their microphone and remove participants, should there be a disruption.

TELEPHONE CONFERENCING PROVIDERS

WHYPAY?

<https://whypay.net>

This is a telecoms provider, which provides a free conferencing service, using 03 telephone numbers. Using this number is completely free using bundled minutes and this applies to mobiles, landlines and pay-phones. If bundled minutes are not included in your package with your telephone provider, then your provider will charge you at the standard geographic rates. Find out more about pricing at <https://whypay.net/compare-plans/>.

Advantages:

- Conference calls can be scheduled in advance.
- Meeting invitations can be added to participants chosen calendar software.
- Support is available directly from the provider.

Disadvantages:

- The free plan only allows for up to 50 participants.
- Features on the free plan are limited.

Conferoo

www.conferoo.co.uk

Conferoo is a conference call service, based in the UK. This service uses 03 numbers, which is free when calling from landlines or mobile phones which have bundled minutes. If bundled minutes are not provided in your telephone package or calling by a pay as you go phone, you will be charged at the local call rate.

Advantages:

- There is no limit to how many participants you can have on the call.
- There is a 'one click dialling' option. Using a smartphone, the app can call the conference number and enter the pin for you.
- Calls can be recorded for free.
- There is no requirement to sign up, in order to use it.

Disadvantages:

- To stop calls being recorded, you have to request another pin and keep the recording box unticked.
- Recordings need to be saved within seven days.

Con-Flab

www.con-flab.co.uk

This is an audio conference call service based in the UK. Conference calls using the 03 dialling number are free on mobiles which have minutes as part of the telephone package.

Advantages:

- Recordings of conference calls can be downloaded.
- Conference call hosts can control the meeting, including: removing participants, adjusting the volume settings and preventing new participants from joining.
- The Outlook plug-in enables you to send invites to participants.
- They have a downloadable mobile app available.

Disadvantages:

- Free conference calling is only available for mobiles. Calls from landlines are charged.
- Recordings are only available to download for a period of up to 90 days.

MONDAY, 06 JULY 2020

BACKGROUND

Over the last year, litter in Pavenham has been managed through a combination of organised volunteer litter picks supported by the Borough Council and informal periodic litter picks conducted by specific members of the community.

The organised litter picks use equipment provided by the Borough Council (hi-vis, hoops, bags, litter pickers and gloves) and the Borough collects the bagged litter a couple of days after the event. Each event is covered by the Borough's insurance when volunteers are operating in 30 mph zones or below and by the Parish Council's insurance if operating in 40 mph or national speed limit zones. Each organised event has typically attracted 7 – 10 volunteers with around 20 bags of litter collected.

In addition to the organised litter picks Tony Tugulu regularly collects litter in the East of the village, I do the same in the West and Don Grant and other volunteers collect litter as they walk around the village. All greatly appreciated.

ISSUE

Following COVID-19, Bedford Borough has reviewed and updated its community litter picking Risk Assessment and is currently waiting for this to be approved. Two informal village litter picks have been held during the COVID-19 lockdown, with volunteers from the same household using equipment I have dropped off at their houses, following applicable government guidance and disposing of collected litter in their own black bins. The Borough Council expects to have the new Risk Assessment approved soon and I will update the Parish Council's own Risk Assessment once this is available.

PROPOSAL

Prior to the Borough Council being in a position to support community litter picks, I propose that Pavenham continues with informal litter picks which follow the relevant government guidance at that point in time. All volunteers will be provided with equipment, collected litter will be disposed of in each household's black bin and I will act as a central point of contact to report any hazardous waste or fly tipping. It will be made clear to all volunteers that they participate at their own risk and these events are not official Borough or Parish Council events.

I would also suggest that the following dates are communicated and when possible are formalised as organised community litter picks:

August 9th, 2020

October 11th, 2020

December 6th, 2020

February 7th, 2021

April 4th, 2021

June 6th, 2021

August 8th, 2021

October 10th, 2021

Steve Rice