

MERE PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER, 7:45PM
AT THE MERE GOLF RESORT AND SPA

Covid Risk Assessment – carried out prior to meeting

1 **PRESENT**

Cllr J Duncalf, Cllr A Newnes, Cllr D Norcott, Cllr D Walker (In The Chair), Cllr J Wright

*Guests: Laura Nelson, Jamie Carruthers and John Pepman all on behalf of Highways England
One member of the public*

2 **APOLOGIES**

Cllr L Reynolds

3 **MINUTES**

i *The minutes of the Mere Parish Council meeting held on the 14th July were proposed by
Cllr Duncalf and seconded by Cllr Newnes. All agreed.*

ii *The minutes of the Extra Ordinary Mere Parish Council meeting held on the 27th August were
proposed by Cllr Walker and seconded by Cllr Norcott. All agreed.*

4 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Cllr Norcott declared an interest in HS2 and Winterbottom Lane listed on the agenda.

Cllr Wright declared an interest in HS2.

5 **MATTERS ARISING**

*It was agreed that all matters arising from the previous meetings minutes are covered under the
agenda headings.*

6 **CASUAL VACANCY**

i *Cheshire East Council have confirmed that they have not received a claim by ten electors in
writing within the requested period for an election to be held to fill the casual vacancy. This
means that Mere Parish Council may co-opt onto the council this evening.*

*Cllr Walker proposed Mr Richard Finch to be co-opted on to the council. Seconded by
Cllr Norcott. All were in favour. Mr Finch happily accepted the position as a Mere Parish
Councillor and signed the “Declaration of Acceptance Of Office” form.*

ii *Raquel Peterson who had been co-opted onto Mere Parish Council at the meeting held on the
14th July has since handed in her resignation letter dated 17th August. As a result notice of a
Casual Vacancy has been displayed on the Cheshire East Council website and Mere Parish
Council website. The Clerk will be notified by Cheshire East Council after the 21st September as to
whether Mere Parish Council can co-opt or not.*

7 **M6 JUNCTION 19 IMPROVEMENTS AND M56, JUNCTIONS 5 AND 6**

*A presentation was given by the following three representatives who work for Amey Sir Robert
McAlpine on behalf of Highways England – Laura Nelson, Jamie Carruthers and John Pepman.
They commented that as a way to help the area they would contribute to things like litter picking
schemes. Consequently the issue of litter on the B5569 was raised. Laura Nelson agreed to look in to
what can be done.*

*The Chairman thanked Laura, Jamie and John for attending the meeting. They left at approximately
8:40pm*

Action: Laura Nelson

8 **POLICE REPORT**

- i PCSO Emma Darroch was not able to attend. However a report has been received from PC Lawrence Price. It stated there had been a scuffle reported in the bar of the Mere Country Club. This was an isolated incident and involved a guest(s) at the premises. The road traffic accident on the 1st September at the junction of the A50 and Mereside Road had been treated as a serious but non-life threatening collision. Although the matter is still being fully investigated excess speed does not seem to have been the main cause.
- ii David Keane, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire – A virtual meeting had been held on the 30th July with Parish and Town Councils representatives. Cllr Walker had represented Mere Parish Council and reported that David Keane is working towards having a designated PCSO and PC for every ward. Cllr Newnes commented about David Keane's idea to create a trial area using a 20mph speed limit. Cllr Newnes proposed that Mere Parish Council offer the parish of Mere to be used as a trial area. Seconded by Cllr Duncalf. All agreed.
Action: Kathryn J Whitlow

9 **MANCHESTER AIRPORT**

Cllr Reynolds prior to this evening's meeting had sent a report to all the Mere Parish Councillors regarding the zoom meeting she attended on the 17th July.

10 **HS2**

A report dated the 28th August from John Atkinson had been circulated to Mere Parish Councillors prior to this meeting.

On the 9th September the council received notification of GI works in Pickmere and Tabley.

11 **B5569**

Regarding the letter which Mere Parish Council has sent to Chris Hodgson and Matthew Rodway (Both of Cheshire East Council) and copied to Esther McVey MP stating the difficulties Mere Parish Council is experiencing in receiving any response from Simon Skates, no reply has been received. However Simon Skates has responded to Mere Parish Council's letter dated the 24th July. He apologises for the delay in responding to our enquires and states he will endeavour to review the items of concern and provide a response by the end of the next week. On the 31st July Mere Parish received a response from Simon Skates to the individual issues listed and states he will be in contact with Cheshire East Highways next week to formalise the work packages. He also states that he welcomes any further thoughts which may be able to be addressed within the remit of mitigation works. His response to the on-going issues are as follows:

i. ***Flooding In Service Road – Simon Skates Response***

- Costain undertook a camera survey which proved they had repaired the system and could not find why there would be a problem draining the service road.
- There does not appear to be a problem with the connection or main drain run.
- Simon Skates will liaise with Cheshire East Council to see what else they can do to try and resolve this intermittent problem.

ii. ***Single Lane Carriageway Signs – Simon Skates Response***

- They will be installed as part of a new signage package which will also include the following.
- Advanced warning sign for roundabout on the northbound approach to Millington roundabout.
- New Bucklowhill village sign – to be incorporated into a gateway feature on southbound approach to the village (Location to be agreed). Simon Skates to prepare plans illustrating the potential location for the parish to discuss and comment.
- Two-way traffic warning sign on southbound carriageway off Millington roundabout.
- New sign assembly at Cicely Mill Lane to update and amalgamate existing signs.
- New 30 national mph signs back to back on Cicely Mill Lane to complement the existing one and address the matter raised in the speed limit review.

- *30mph repeater sign between terminal sign on Chapel Lane near Hulseheath Lane and Chapel Lane bridge.*
 - *Two-way traffic sign on exit from Mere Resort.*
 - *Speed limit sign on exit from Mere*
 - *New Mere Village sign – to be incorporated into gateway feature on northbound approach on B5569 – Location to be agreed. Due to narrowness of the bund on the approach to the B5569/A50 junction the assembly may be best situated on the right hand side just prior to the end of the southbound footpath.*
 - *Two way traffic warning sign on B5569 exit from Tabley little roundabout.*
 - *Advance roundabout sign on southbound approach to Tabley little roundabout.*
 - *Removal of parking quarter mile sign on westbound A50 leaving Mere towards High Legh.*
 - *Cycleway direction signs at Old Hall Lane underpass, Mere Junction, Bucklowhill, Millington roundabout and Cherry Tree Lane.*
- iii. ***Kerbs – Simon Skates Response***
- *Highways England has repaired all kerbs previously identified although Simon Skates is aware further damage has occurred. This will be incorporated into a maintenance package of works which Simon Skates will be commissioning with Cheshire East Highways.*
- iv. ***Road Sweeping – Simon Skates Response***
- *Simon Skates thought ANSA were now sweeping but he will chase them up and enquire what regime will be applied.*
 - *Simon Skates will be commissioning Cheshire East Highways to do a road sweep after week killer application.*
- v. ***Speed Limit – Simon Skates Response***
- *The speed limit review concludes that the section of road does not meet any of the criteria needed to establish it as either a 30mph or 40mph road and stipulates that the speed should be 50mph. Simon Skates has pressed both report writers, Cheshire East Highways Traffic Team and senior Infrastructure Managers on the acceptability of raising the limit to the requested 40mph. This has unfortunately been rejected as an option for the following reasons:*
 - a) *The speed would not be aligned to the council’s approved speed strategy.*
 - b) *Implementation of a limit outside of the strategy would set a precedent which may attract interest for other roads to similarly be changed against the Council’s guidelines.*
 - c) *The Traffic Regulations Order needed to change the speed limit must be approved by the councils Portfolio holder who it would seem is reluctant to approve any officer recommendations that are not aligned to the Council’s policies.*
 - *Simon Skates has been told last year that the speed strategy is currently under review and he has again requested an update on progress with a view to revisiting this application in the hope that the section of road may satisfy new criteria which would allow the speed limit to be set at 40mph.*
- vi. ***Bunds – Simon Skates Response***
- *Highways England have followed on from last year with a second dose of weed killer to the areas most affected by broad leaf and thistle weeds. Simon Skates has asked if this has been or is still due to be completed as the timing would have coincided with the Covid 19 lockdown.*
 - *Simon Skates has e-mailed Cheshire East Highways to ensure the landscaping now forms part of the routine maintenance but in the first instance he has requested that they review all areas now transferred to Cheshire East Council with specific focus on bringing them up to the requested standard before Cheshire East Council formally include them on the maintenance programme. These works to include weed killer application to the verges, bunds and road channels, seeding where needed to promote the wildflower grasses*

vii. **Gateway Features – Simon Skates Response**

- States there are sufficient funds available for a number of gateway features.
- Anticipates that at least two more for the village sign replacements.
- He asks Mere Parish Council to let him know where we wish them to be located.

viii. **Flashing Speed Signs – Simon Skates Response**

- Suggested it will be better to have a fixed speed sign on the exit from the Mere Golf and Spa Resort as the approaching speed to the junction from the Mere Golf and Spa Resort would not trigger the VAS to flash. The one by the old speed camera site would be a good position and Simon Skates proposes that the second VAS could be nearer Mere A50 for the northbound traffic and located after the last of the street lights situated in the bund.

After discussion Mere Parish Council asked the Clerk to reply to Simon Skates as follows:

- **Village Signs** – it is not clear as to where he is suggesting the signs be placed. Can he clarify the positions please?
- **Bucklowhill Village sign** – this is not needed as there is no such place.
- **Gateway Features** – we suggest the following locations. One on the A50 outside the Kilton and Hulseheath Lane and one on the B5569 at the garage and another at the other end by Mere and Tabley Community Club.
- **Flashing Speed Signs** – what is happening about theses?
- **Wooden Bollard Missing** – a bollard has been knocked down and is missing on the bridle/cycle way as you enter Bentlyhurst Lane. Already a car has been seen to be parking there. The council is concerned that travellers may start to park there. Can it be replaced?
- **Missing Mere Sign** – Nothing has been mentioned in Simon Skates response about the missing Mere sign on the B5569 as you leave Tabley and travel towards Mere. Can he confirm it will be replaced?
- **Invite Simon Skates** to the next Mere Parish Council meeting on the 19th October to give an update on the issues we have raised.

Action: Kathryn J Whitlow

12 **SPEED LIMIT ON B5569**

This has already been mentioned in the item above however, a copy of the Cheshire East Highways Speed Limit Assessment form has been received referring to the B5569. It refers to the injury collision history for the period 2014 to 2018 and states that there were no fatal injuries or serious injuries recorded during this time.

With regards to slight injury there were two recorded in 2014, one in 2015 and one in 2016. None of the reported injuries were speed related. The assessment concludes as follows:

“The current speed limit of 30mph conflicts with the Cheshire East Speed management strategy, with open fields on one side of the road and properties set well back on the other. There are no schools, shops etc, within the assessment area and no generators of pedestrian activity. The speed limit was formerly 50mph which is more in keeping with the characteristics of the road.”

13 **FENCING AT THE END OF THE MERE**

Cllr Parkinson was absent and so unable to update the council as to whether she has managed to find out who owns the land at the end of the Mere.

The decision was made to arrange for a work party to tidy the area and repair the fence.

Arrangements to be made at the next council meeting in October.

14 **COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE – REMEMBERING A COUNCILLOR**

The brass plaque was given to Cllr Duncalf who will ask Mr Duncalf if he can mount it on a stone provided by Cllr John Wright.

Thanks were expressed to the Mere Residents Association for funding the engraved brass plaque which will be placed in front of the Cherry tree at Mere Traffic lights.

Action: Cllr Duncalf and Cllr Wright

15 **MERE PARISH COUNCIL WEB SITE**

The Accessibility Report has been received from Town and Parish Council Websites and it is clear that there is a lot of work for the clerk to do. For example amending the files already on our web site to meet the accessibility criteria.

The Framework Accessibility Report has yet to be produced. Once it has been completed the Clerk will assess how much work is involved in order to bring our web site up to the legal accessibility requirement and report back to the council.

Action: Kathryn Whitlow

Cllr Walker queried the council's response time to residents contacting the council via the web site. The Clerk confirmed that all queries are responded to as soon as possible either by providing the information requested or confirming that the issue raised will be discussed at the next Mere Parish Council meeting.

The council agreed this was an acceptable response time.

16 **WINTERBOTTOM LANE AND HOO GREEN LANE**

No response has been received from Cllr Laura Crane, Highways Portfolio Holder, regarding the letter Mere Parish Council sent dated the 22nd July. The Clerk has sent a reminder to

Cllr Crane (dated the 7th September) but still no response has been received.

This item to be carried over to the next Mere Parish Council meeting.

17 **MOSS VIEW FARM, WARRINGTON ROAD**

A report has been received from Paul Basford, Housing Technical Assistant at Cheshire East Council stating he has obtained a series of photographs and updated Cheshire East Council records and Empty Homes Officer, Alan Salt.

The Clerk e-mailed Paul on the 7th September for an update only to learn that he no longer works with the Housing Standards Team. The contact person is now Alan Salt who replied on the 14th September stating he has read through the file and he thinks there may have been an application to extend the property but he is not sure. He will look into this more before contacting the owner of Moss View Farm. Mr Salt stated that the property will be inspected again before he tries to make contact with the owner next week.

The council requested the Clerk to write to Mr Salt stating that Mere Parish Council is very concerned that the property is not secure and hence inviting for people to occupy the house. Can it at least be made secure as soon as possible.

Action: Kathryn Whitlow

18 **PLANNING APPLICATION DETAILS**

There have been three new planning applications and five Decision notices received since the last Mere Parish Council meeting. The details are recorded in the Planning Book.

19 **RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICERS REPORT**

i. Internal Audit for the finance year ending March 2020

The conclusion upon the accounts given by JDH Business Services Ltd is as follows:

“On the basis of the internal audit work carried out, ... in our view the council's system of internal controls is in place, adequate for the purpose intended and effective, subject to the recommendations reported in the action plan.”

The action plan has listed five issues which are as follows:

Issue 1

There is a new internal control objective in the AGAR internal audit certificate that requires internal audit to conclude on whether the Public Rights Notice during the previous Summer (2018/19 financial year) was compliant with the regulations.

The public notice was displayed after the first day of the public notice period. However, the notice must be displayed to the public at least one day earlier than the commencement date of the notice period. Therefore, we have concluded the council did not comply with the requirements for the Public Rights Notice for 2018/19

Recommendation – *The council should ensure compliance with the legal requirements for the Annual Notice Of Public Rights.*

Clerk's Response – *Instead of the day before the notice period began it was displayed on the first day! This year however, the notice has been displayed well before the commencement date.*

Issue 2

The one page Standing Orders provided for Internal Audit review are minimal and do not reflect all the requirements of the parish council.

Recommendation – *The council should adopt NALC Model Standing Orders.*

Clerk's Response – *I am currently working on producing standing orders for Mere Parish Council and aim to have them ready to put before the council for approval before the end of the year.*

Issue 3

The fireworks contract is in excess of the threshold of £2000 for tendering in the Financial Regulations but no tenders were provided for internal audit review.

Recommendation – *Contracts in excess of £2000 must be procured in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the council.*

Clerks Response – *Prior to the next bonfire event three quotes will be obtained for the firework display.*

Issue 4

The cash book column for salaries does not include all salary costs. Instead HMRC payments for salary deductions are posted in the general column. Therefore, there is no audit trail to the staff costs figure included in the AGAR annual return.

Recommendation – *All salary costs, including HMRC payments for tax deductions, should be posted to the salary column in the cash book, the total of which should then equal the amount included in Staff Costs in the AGAR annual return.*

Clerk's Response – *This will be done for the following financial year accounts.*

Issue 5

There is no evidence in the minutes that regular budgetary control reports are provided to the council.

Recommendation – *Budget monitoring should occur throughout the financial year and minutes should evidence the review of the budgetary control information.*

Clerk's Response – *A budget review will be included at each council meeting from now on.*

ii **External Audit**

An e-mail has been received dated the 20th August from PKF Littlejohn Ltd stating they have received and logged the notification of exempt status for the year ended 31st March 2020 submitted by Mere Parish Council. By notifying them that Mere Parish Council has claimed exemption there is no review to be performed and consequently no auditor certificate and report or any other closure documentation will be issued by them for this year. Unless they receive any correspondence from local electors during the period for the exercise for public rights that require them to contact Mere Parish Council, we will not hear from them again until the planning for the 2020/21 review year get underway.

iii Paid into the cheque account on the 27th August – precept

£4000.00

- iv *The total in the cheque account at the beginning of this meeting is £6825.79
Of which £170.43 belongs to the Archive Fund.*
- v *Cheque Signatures – The Clerk asked Matt Lewis on the 7th September for an update as nothing has been heard from Barclays since the 21st July when the Clerk asked for the mandate process to be started again. The Clerk will follow this up.
Action: Kathryn Whitlow*
- vi *Clerks Salary – According to the contract of employment the pay level is to increase by one level upon each successful year until the level SCP 23 is reached.
Having confirmed with the Chairman the pay level will increase to SCP 21 and to commence from the 1st September.
This was proposed by Cllr Duncalf and seconded by Cllr Walker*

- vii **Budget Review** – *The Responsible Financial Officer gave the following report:
Once the cheques have been paid listed under Accounts For Payment there will be £6539.59 in the cheque account. This is to cover expenses up until next April when we receive a precept payment. As the bonfire event has been cancelled this year the predicted payments to be made between now and next April are as follows:*

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------|
| <i>Shires Pay Roll</i> | - | <i>£0090.00</i> |
| <i>Clerk Salary</i> | - | <i>£1600.00</i> |
| <i>HMRC</i> | - | <i>£0600.00</i> |
| <i>Website</i> | - | <i>£0330.00</i> |
| <i>Remembrance Wreath</i> | - | <i>£0020.00</i> |
| <i>Parish Maintenance</i> | - | <i>£1400.00</i> |

TOTAL **£4040.00**

Assuming no other payments are made other than those listed above it will mean that in April 2021 there will be approximately £2499.59 in the Mere Parish Council cheque account.

20 **ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

- i *Invoice from Shires Pay Service Ltd for the second quarter pay roll service £24.00
GDPR software first employee £09.00
To act as Pension Delegate in 2020 £20.00
Cheque fee £01.00
Total £65.40*
- Cheque made payable to
“Shires Pay Service Limited”
Cheque No: 100818*
- ii *Invoice from JDH Business Services Ltd for the Internal Audit £220.80
Cheque made payable to
“JDH Business Services Ltd”
Cheque No: 100819*

*Cllr Wright proposed that the above invoice be paid. Seconded by Cllr Norcott.
All agreed.*

21 **NEW BUSINESS**

- i **Union Jack Flag** – Mr Hockenhull (who is responsible for ensuring that the flag is flown on the correct dates during the year) has reported the flag is looking very tired and has one or two holes appearing in it.
Cllr Norcott proposed that the council purchase a new flag. Seconded by Cllr Duncalf. All agreed.
The measurement of the current flag is 7ft 6” by 3ft 9”.
Action : Kathryn Whitlow
- ii **Matrix Sign** – Complaints have been received from residents about the matrix sign outside the Mere Golf Resort and Spa advertising they are open.
The council asked the clerk to write to The Mere Golf Resort and Spa and enquire as to how long they intend to have the sign on display as we have received complaints from residents.
Action: Kathryn Whitlow
- iii **Mereside Road** – Cllr Walker has been contacted by Mr Stanhope on Mereside Road voicing concern about speeding cars. He has also brought to the council’s attention a speed sign near to the Swan which is obscured.
Cllr Finch volunteered to make the sign more visible.
Action: Cllr Finch.
Cllr Walker will ask PCSO Emma Darroch if the offer to train residents to use a speed gun is still available. If so then a list of names will be collated by Cllr Walker and given to PCSO Darroch.
Cllr Walker to enquire if there will be any cost?
Action: Cllr Walker.
- iv **Walking and Cycling Schemes To Boost Cheshire East’s Covid 19 Recovery** – An e-mail received from Cheshire East Council with a media release giving details about the first phase of Active Travel projects in Cheshire East as part of plans to support the borough through recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
Noted by the council.
- v **Virtual Council Meetings** – Cllr Walker asked if everyone agreed to hold meetings with very few items listed on the agenda, such as an extra ordinary meeting, virtually?
All councillors agreed to this.
- vi **Refresher Courses** – Cllr Walker encouraged everyone to look at the courses arranged by Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils and to let the Clerk know if they wish to book a place.
- vii **Footbridge Over M6** – Cllr Norcott raised the issue of walkers wishing to cross the M6 via Hollow Wood foot bridge which was knocked down by a Sainsbury lorry in 2013. It would appear it has still not been replaced and Cllr Norcott has experienced as many as thirty to forty walkers (especially during lockdown) coming into his yard asking where is the bridge?
The last correspondence which Mere Parish Council received about the bridge is dated the 22nd April 2014. This was from Louise Cannon, Service Delivery Manager, Highways Agency, Manchester in which she stated the programme for Hollow Wood Farm bridge is that the design work will be from the 27th October 2014 to the 31st July 2015. Construction will be from the 27th October until the 4th May 2016. She concludes by stating this is subject to change throughout the year.
Obviously the bridge has never been built so the council asked the Clerk to contact Louise Cannon and ask why. It was understood at the time that Sainsbury’s insurance would be paying the cost.
Action: Kathryn J Whitlow
- viii **Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Streamlined Consultation – Winter Service**
As the closing date for comments to be submitted is not until the 20th November and, we have another Mere Parish Council meeting before then, the Chairman asked for this item to be carried over to the next meeting.

22 **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Monday 19th October, 7:45pm at The Mere Golf Resort and Spa.

23 **ITEMS INTRODUCED BY COUNCILLORS**

- i Cllr Finch suggested informing Cheshire East Council that an accident has occurred at the junction of the A50 and Mereside Road even though they have redesigned the junction layout.*
- ii Cllr Newnes raised the issue of running water on Warrington Road about half way between Clamhunger Lane and the Mere traffic lights. He will report it.*

The meeting closed at approximately 10:10pm

Signed:

Date: