

# MINUTES OF THE CLERKS MEETING

Wednesday 2 September 2020, 5pm – 7pm

Virtual meeting via Teams

Attendance	
<b>Attendees</b> Alain Skelding, Normanton le Heath Parish Meeting Alexandra Stretton, Packington Parish Council Andrea Robinson, Ashby Woulds Town Council Cathy Tibbles, Whitwick Parish Council Dawn Roach, Measham Parish Council Fiona Palmer, Castle Donington Parish Council and Swannington Parish Council Jan Shepherd, Heather Parish Council Karen Turrell, Ellistown & Battleflat Parish Council Kelly Grove, Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council Lisa Clarke, Osgathorpe Parish Council Samantha Lockwood, Breedon on the Hill Parish Council and Long Whatton and Diseworth PC Vicky Roe, Kegworth Parish Council	
<b>Presenters</b> Bev Smith, North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC), Chief Executive (BS) Paul Sanders, NWLDC, Head of Community Services (PS) Chris Elston, NWLDC, Head of Planning and Infrastructure(CE) Ian Nelson, NWLDC, Planning Policy Team Manager	
<b>Councillors/Officers</b> Cllr Andrew Woodman, Portfolio Holder for Community Services Daphne Robinson, NWLDC, Community Focus Officer (DR) Gillian Squires, NWLDC, Community Focus Officer (GS)	
<b>Apologies</b> Sarah Tombs, Stretton en le Field Parish Meeting	
Detail	
1	<b>WELCOME – PAUL SANDERS</b>  PS welcomed everyone to the meeting of clerks and invited attendees to introduce themselves. PS outlined the agenda for the evening and made a few important announcements before handing over to BS.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emma Trahearn, Community Focus team leader, has had a little boy called Arthur James over the weekend and is now on maternity leave until next July. Mother and baby are both doing well. Congratulations to Emma and Yohan. Interviews for Emma’s maternity cover will take place shortly.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jessica Lloyd-Davis has started as the Grants' Officer; the grant schemes are due to re-open in mid-September.</li> <li>• A big thank you to all parish and town councils who have been involved with the COVID-19 community response. Community Focus has been working with over 70 local groups, circulating regular updates and newsletters. Parish and town councils have done a fantastic job and it has been a great team effort between many organisations to help support the particularly vulnerable. NWLDC is scheduled to continue providing support up to the New Year.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.0</b></p> <p><b>2.1</b></p>	<p><b>NWLDC COVID RESPONSE AND RECOVERY – Bev Smith</b></p> <p>BS reiterated PS' thanks to all parish and town councils for their involvement in the district-wide response to COVID-19.</p> <p>BS outlined the content of her presentation – see attached.</p> <p><b>NWL RESPONSE TO COVID-19</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NWLDC is a category 1 responder and has a legal responsibility to provide support. An immediate response was instigated and in the very beginning there were daily meetings seven days a week for the first four weeks. NWLDC continues to retain the same level of response as the emergency response has not yet been stood down.</li> <li>• Some challenges have been encountered, for example responding to the changes in Government guidance notes, which frequently occurred on a daily basis.</li> <li>• On Day 1 it was identified that NWLDC had 128 clinically vulnerable staff, 68 of whom were in the operational area such as Waste Services, so needed to shield.</li> <li>• Risk assessments were carried out for all services, and these needed to include things like the impact of childcare issues. One of the key challenges was around communication and NWLDC has tried very hard to communicate as much as possible.</li> <li>• The council has been supporting 1,200 shielding residents and set up a community hub to achieve this; this involved 44 members of staff and 600 volunteers (British Red Cross, VAL, NHS volunteers). We have also helped co-ordinate the 22 community hubs set up across the district.</li> <li>• During just one week in May we had approximately 70,000 cases open and were making 2000 calls per day. Redeploying staff to do this relied on a lot of good will from partners, which we were very grateful for. It's great that we are able to use technology but this was a challenge to set up too, resulting in seven day weeks for the ICT team.</li> <li>• Also very early on the Police were unable to socially distance effectively at the Fire Station and by the second week 30 police officers were redeployed to NWLDC offices.</li> <li>• A real pressure point was being able to deliver critical services, such as Waste Services, with staff shielding and the need for physical distancing in cabs. We were impacted by a number of outbreaks in care homes and work places; environmental health staff were redeployed to help with this.</li> <li>• Sadly, across NWL, 67 people have lost their lives to date; each and every one of these individuals are important and their loss has impacted entire</li> </ul>	

communities. The impact on bereavement services has been quite major, with families unable to hold the sort of service they would have wished for. The bereavement services team has, with sensitivity and care, supported the families as best they can.

- Another pressure point has been tenant support, with a requirement to provide support to the most vulnerable tenants without being able to see them face to face. NWLDC was also involved in providing support to ensure that homeless individuals were housed.
- A rapid response to support businesses has been key. When the Government announced that business grants would be made available, the challenge was to deliver the £20 million pounds of funding as quickly as possible. Various grants were rolled out, each with strict criteria and assessments, and it was quite difficult to quickly reach all the businesses who required support.
- The Grant scheme closed on 31 August, supported 1,653 businesses across North West Leicestershire (NWL) and paid out £19.17 million (97.6% of the funding allocated).
- NWLDC received hundreds of phone calls from businesses who had an expectation and requirement that money be paid across immediately. This was a challenge as it took some time for the Government funding to be paid across to NWLDC in order to pay it on.

## **2.2 RECOVERY – WORKING IN A NEW NORM**

- The next part of dealing with an emergency is recovery, determining what the new way of working will look like. The NWL recovery plan mirrors the regional and national approach, with the focus firmly on Community, Economy and Organisational Recovery.
- Preparations needed to be made for the phased reopening that was required. Since 1<sup>st</sup> June we could start opening up some education, retail and markets and from the 1<sup>st</sup> July the night time economy started to open. Each plan needed to be put in place and required a great deal of engagement with town/parish councils and communities.
- The number of fixed penalty notices issued in NWL has been extremely low because people have been patient and tolerant. We had to do some work within licensed premises and continue to monitor this.
- The Leicester lockdown required some support resources from NWLDC, particularly for education and further education providers. Schools have opened within the last week and 97% of schools are now open across Leicestershire. There have been no real issues noted within schools; the main issue has been a behavioural issue when parents are dropping children off at school – more messages regarding social distancing are needed.
- We have now restored 77 of the services NWLDC had to put on hold. A small number have yet to be restored but we are working hard to get this back up and running. We have seen a big shift in how customers access services, with a significant increase in the number of accounts being set up online. We have not had any customers want to come into the offices.
- COVID-19 has had a major financial impact on NWLDC with a £2 million loss in income and an increase in costs. We have received a Government grant that covers 50% of the loss but now need to identify how to close the £1 million gap.

- NWLDC has contacted all parish councils regarding any income losses and is supporting where possible.
- The Recovery stage now needs a lot of work, eg. helping people with debt issues, helping people come out of hospital, etc.
- Recognising heroes is important. A time for commemoration is also important.

### 2.3 ECONOMIC RECOVERY

- NWL had the highest number of furloughed workers in Leicestershire, with around 34% of staff (16,800 employees) furloughed. There is a real issue regarding the rate of unemployment we are likely to see in the coming months.
- But we are also seeing positive things; we have a lot of distribution companies in our district and there has been expansion in this sector. I recently attended the opening of Oakland International at Bardon, which has delivered 320 new jobs.
- There has been a 43% increase in vacancies advertised between May-July as companies look to restart.
- Some sectors such as tourism are struggling.
- NWLDC's Economic Strategy Recovery Plan is due to go to Cabinet in November. We will look to support the retail and tourism sector. There is a real opportunity to support people with refocusing and reskilling.
- To help town and village centres we will be launching a 'Shop Local' campaign within the next few weeks and will be looking for support from parish/town councils to help with this.

### 2.4 PREPARING FOR WINTER

- The national 'reasonable worst-case scenario' has been leaked in the media, which expects an increase in COVID-19 cases as we come into winter. A strategy and plan are being put together along with lessons learned to date.
- A national flu vaccination programme for the over 50s is being prepared so we will be linking in with this.
- Brexit remains on the horizon in NWL due to our proximity to East Midlands Airport. We are planning for this and supporting businesses with their plans.
- With regard to local lock downs, powers exist for this in Leicestershire and will be passed to the local authority to close individual premises and deal with work-place outbreaks. I am meeting weekly with the Director of Public Health to review cases, carry out analysis and make appropriate plans. If/when cases rise, parish and town councils will be the first to know. We are currently running at 1 in 100,000, which is the lowest rate in Leicestershire at the moment.
- If we do have wards where there are local problems with outbreaks, we will be relying on parish councils to help support how this goes forward regarding testing centres, etc.

#### **ACTION**

- Community Focus to circulate slides.

**CF**

	<p><b>Questions and Answers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment from Cllr Andrew Woodman: It has been a challenging year to say the least but, looking at the positives that have come out of this situation, the way that communities have come together and supported vulnerable residents, has been fantastic. We hope that parish/town councils feel that the district council has stepped up to the plate and that you feel supported during this time. Thank you for all the work you have done within your local communities and hopefully this community support will continue</li> <li>• VR – experiences and financial impacts of COVID have been vastly different from parish to parish and this should be taken into account by NWLDC. In Kegworth there has been a fantastic community driven response, led by one of the parish councillors. BS confirmed that NWLDC has written to all parish/town councils asking what the impact has been on them and asking for them to come forward with any financial losses. NWLDC has applied the same criteria as the Government, paying out 75p for every pound lost.</li> </ul> <p><b>BS left the meeting at this point.</b></p>	
<p><b>3.0</b></p> <p><b>3.1</b></p>	<p><b>PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE – CHRIS ELSTON / IAN NELSON</b></p> <p>CN outlined that the Government’s ‘Planning for the Future’ white paper was published a couple of weeks ago. NWLDC’s response paper will be published on 12 October and will go to Cabinet on 29 October.</p> <p><b>PILLAR 1 – PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This section on public engagement looks at ‘digital civic engagement’ and is worth parish and town councils having a look at. The Government will provide templates to planning authorities and these will be more interactive and map-based.</li> <li>• There are 24 specific proposals outlined but by its very nature of being a white paper, there is a lack of detail available. The proposal that has caught media attention most is ‘simplifying planning’, which aims to simplify three key areas: growth, renewal, protection.</li> <li>• In growth areas development would automatically get outline planning permission, no matter its size, as long as it is identified in the Local Plan. The Local Plan contains a suite of policies dealing with a range of issues that help to determine planning applications. These policies are due to be replaced by national policies. Growth areas are supported by detailed design codes and design guides; this approach is already used a lot in Europe and North America where they have a more zonal type system. IN feels that the guides will therefore require a lot more detail.</li> <li>• The other issue that has caught press attention is housing numbers. A separate consultation is currently taking place that will bring changes to the planning system. Changes are proposed to the standard method, which is a simplified method to calculate housing numbers required. The new proposals in effect increase the number of houses to be built within the district.</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Plans (NPs) would be retained; the white paper talks about providing more digital tools and support to groups carrying out NPs.</li> </ul>	

### 3.2 PILLAR 2 – PLANNING FOR BEAUTIFUL AND SUSTAINABLE PLACES

- Design guidelines will include more community involvement. This could be challenging in terms of the number of settlements that could be involved but also gives communities the opportunity to get involved in design early on.
- Developments that meet the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission will be 'fast-tracked for beauty'. This aims to improve quality of development. We have had a big push on design quality in NWL over the past decade and it feels like we might be punished for already taking this on. If there is a 'one size fits all' approach nationally this might impact us.

### 3.3 PILLAR 3 – PLANNING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTED PLACES

- At present there are two routes to secure developer contributions, through Section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is not mandatory for local authorities. The white paper proposes to abolish S106 and replace this with a National Community Infrastructure Levy. Instead of the developer being asked to provide a play area, they would be charged a certain amount of money per size of development. The levy would be collected nationally but spent locally. This differs from the current CIL levy, which is set and collected by the local authority. We have not really set CIL in our area due to land values.
- The new approach would be a more simple process to run and the developer knows where they sit. However there is a lack of detail. As it is a white paper there are quite likely to be further changes over time and it is also likely to take time to bring in.
- If, as parish/town councils, you feel that there is insufficient time or capacity to write your own response, you may wish to look at NWLDC's response paper and align your own response to this or note that you support NWLDC's response.

#### **ACTION**

- Community Focus to send out presentation and links after the meeting.
- IN to share NWLDC's response paper with all parish councils when ready.
- ALL parishes to review the consultation white paper and contact Planning Policy for more information or to talk through any specific areas.

#### **Questions and Answers**

- LC – concerned about levy being collected nationally and spent locally. Is there a greater risk of the monies not being spent in the parish where the development is located? IN – there is no information on this at present, but looking at the CIL scheme, this only needs to be spent in the local authority area. There could possibly be a risk of money being collected in one area of the district but spent elsewhere. Therefore there is a risk of losing the real, local element of the monies.
- CT comment – interesting that instead of CIL we may be getting NIL, which could be what parish councils end up with.
- IN comment – under CIL 25% of the monies raised would need to be used in the parish council area.
- CE – there have been a few comments on the Teams chat about parishes feeling overwhelmed about the level of information and detail. Please

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	<p>approach Planning Policy to help clarify any particular areas you would like help with.</p>	
<b>4.0</b>	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An evaluation form to be sent out after the meeting.</li> <li>• CT - Please send clerks' congratulations to Emma on the birth of her new baby boy.</li> <li>• PS - Reopening of leisure centres has not been easy. Numbers are down but looking to increase the offer in leisure centres. Would like some feedback from you on what is opening up again within your communities.</li> <li>• PS – would like to collate what doing with community halls and meeting places. Is there anything that NWLDC can learn from this to feed back to the Leicestershire response?</li> </ul>	<b>CF</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wed 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 5pm</li> </ul>	<b>CF</b>