

**COCKSHUTT CUM PETTON PARISH COUNCIL
CLERKS REPORT – IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS
DATE: 9th APRIL 2020**

In the light of recent government advice in an effort to stem the transmission of Coronavirus, CCP-PC should now consider how it proceeds with meetings given the Council's statutory duties.

Statutory duties between now and the end of June:

- Holding the Annual Parish Meeting before the 1st June
- Holding the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in May
- Approving the Annual Returns (which must be done at a Council meeting before the end of June)

We are waiting on the government to bring forward emergency legislation to give more flexibility to enable Parish Councils to operate effectively.

How does it work with the law as it stands at the moment?

Meetings must be held in person and in public. So for example, the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council in May will happen but if it is not quorate that meeting then can be adjourned and re-scheduled. Properly called meetings cannot be cancelled. We can hold extra-ordinary meetings to deal with certain items.

"NALC strongly encourages councillors and staff to follow government guidance on social distancing and self-isolation. This is particularly important if anyone is in an at-risk group as identified by the guidance. We would encourage local councils to consider if they need to hold scheduled meetings at all. The health and safety of councillors, staff and the public should be your primary concern. If local councils do follow government guidance on social distancing and social isolation and so they do not hold scheduled meetings, including annual council meetings, NALC's opinion is that the likelihood of a successful legal challenge is low.

RECOMMENDATION

In order for the Parish Council to comply with its statutory duties as best it can whilst also adhering to government health advice and restrictions the Parish Council is recommended to put in place a Scheme of Delegation

SCHEME OF DELEGATION

- *To note that it is lawful for the Clerk in accordance with 4.1 CCP-PC financial regulations, to spend against specific items all of which having been identified in the budget when setting the precept, and additionally to authorise the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and authorised signatories to make payment in excess of £250.00 for SALC affiliation fees, the Council's Insurance due on 1st June and street lighting repairs in excess of £250.00. All payments to be reported to the Council at the next ordinary meeting to be held as soon as practicable subject to current government health advice & restrictions*

Current CCP-PC financial regs. already authorise :-

- 4.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by:
- the Council for all grants and any item over £250;
 - the Clerk for any items under £250 or less.

Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the Chair of Council or relevant committee.

- 4.2 No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget for that class of expenditure other than by resolution of the Council.....

- *To note that it is lawful for the Clerk in accordance with 4.5 of CCP-PC financial regulations, to authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the Clerk's judgement is necessary and to authorise urgent work when unforeseen circumstances occur, and additionally to authorise the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and authorised signatories to make payment:-*
 - *For the patio to a maximum of £5,000.*
 - *Recent/ongoing essential drainage works on Jubilee Field**All payments to be reported to the Council at the next ordinary meeting to be held as soon as practicable subject to current government health advice & restrictions¹*

- 4.5 In cases of extreme risk to the delivery of council services, the Clerk may authorise revenue expenditure on behalf of the Council which in the Clerk's judgement it is necessary to carry out. Such expenditure includes repair, replacement or other work, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £500.

The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

- *To re-affirm that the Clerk/Locum Clerk responds to planning applications in accordance with CCP-PC Scheme of Delegation on planning applications adopted on adopted 14/2/19*

¹ Grant applications to be suspended until the resumption of Council meetings at which the Full Council may consider and approve such applications

- *To re-affirm that the Parish Council will respond to relevant consultations in accordance with the scheme of delegation adopted 10/10/2019*

To delegate to the Clerk (Locum Clerk) in consultation with the Chair

- *the postponement/cancellation of the Ordinary Meetings of the Council currently scheduled monthly for 2020 should this be required*
- *To receive and act upon Government advice in relation to the holding of the Annual Meeting of the Parish scheduled to meet on 9th April 2020 (noting such meetings must be held before 1 June) and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council scheduled to meet on 14th May 2020 (noting such a meeting must be held in May), the Clerk (Locum Clerk) to make necessary re-arrangements for these meetings*

In the event that a meeting to approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Returns is not advised or not possible members to approve the AGAR by confirming their approval and vote to the Clerk at clerk@cockshuttumpetton-pc.gov.uk