

Wickwar Parish Council 24th June 2021 - Agenda Report

4. To AGREE the date and venue for the next face to face meeting of the Council.

Preparing for a return to face to face meetings

The following government guidance sets out how Councils may safely meet face to face after 7th May 2021 (when remote meetings ceased to be legal).

[COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of council buildings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings)

All meetings of the Council must be accessible for the public to view. This can be by remote means (not currently technically possible for this Council) or in person, subject to venue capacity and social distancing.

In line with this guidance the Council may legally meet face to face subject to an appropriate risk assessment. At the Council's last legal meeting on 5th May 2021 a Temporary Scheme of Delegation to the Clerk was agreed from the period starting 7th May until such time as the Council agrees it can lawfully meet safely within COVID-19 restrictions. At that time the Temporary Scheme of Delegation to be reviewed.

It is recommended that the Temporary Scheme of Delegation remains in place so that urgent business can continue to be conducted in the event that face to face meetings cannot recommence (e.g. due to local circumstances or national government guidance).

Options

According to the Council's annual meeting schedule upcoming meeting dates are as follows:

Weds 7th July

Weds 1st September

The Council is asked to consider the following dates and potential venues for recommencing face to face meetings, and take a decision on each.

Option 1 - August meeting

Cancel the next scheduled meeting on 7th July 2020 and hold a meeting in August (at a venue to be confirmed) to conduct any business on the July agenda. An online discussion can be held on 7th July and the Clerk can use delegated powers to action any urgent decisions.

Pros

- Less risky than holding a meeting in July.
- According to the latest timetable all Covid 19 restrictions will be lifted on 19th July 2021. Reduced requirement for detailed risk assessment and preparations.
- No restrictions on access to members of the public.
- If the meeting is held after 5th August the Clerk will have been double vaccinated (duty of care to staff).
- A greater proportion of the adult population will have been double vaccinated.

Cons

Options are available to hold a meeting on 7th July (indoors or outdoors).

Other local Parish Councils have already held meetings or plan to hold meetings before August, which could lead parishioners to question this decision.

Option 2 – 7th July meeting (outdoors)

Hold a meeting on 7th July at an outdoor venue. This could be at King George's Field OR Cllr Isaac has kindly offered his garden, which has access to parking and WIFI. Members of the public could attend.

Pros

- Minimal risk of virus transmission as long as social distancing is adhered to (so less risky than an indoor meeting).
- Meetings resumed as early as possible to ensure democratic accountability to members of the public.
- No restrictions on access to members of the public.
- Minimal risk assessment and preparation – mark out 2m distances for councillors who bring own chair and umbrella.

Cons

- Poor weather may lead to curtailment/ cancellation of the meeting.
- Use of a private garden is not ideal, but is legal.

Option 3 – 7th July meeting (indoors)

Hold a meeting on 7th July at an indoor venue other than the Town Hall. Options are the school hall at Wickwar Community Centre (only available from 7.45pm) or Holy Trinity Church (subject to permission)

PLEASE NOTE There is more space available for social distancing and better ventilation at Holy Trinity Church.

Pros

- Meetings resumed as early as possible to ensure democratic accountability to members of the public.
- Do not need to consider impact of bad weather.

Cons

- Most risky of all three options (in terms of virus transmission and risk of attendees having to self isolate for 10 days afterwards if a case is subsequently identified)
- Detailed risk assessment required (see attached draft at Appendix 1) due to continuing Covid 19 restrictions (until 19th July 2021)
- Increased preparation time for Clerk
- Restrictions on access to members of the public (due to social distancing)
- No WIFI in either venue
- Clerk may not be able to attend

Recommendation

Option 2.

5. To CONSIDER and take a DECISION on whether to instruct the Clerk to obtain quotations for the following tidying/ maintenance work in the closed churchyard and open cemetery.

Background

There have been some recent issues with non-fulfilment of the three-year mowing contract for the cemeteries which was awarded in April 2021. The open cemetery should be mowed fortnightly from April - Oct (with the exception of a wildflower area) and the closed churchyard should be mown/strimmed fortnightly from July - Oct.

The contract is being more carefully managed and the Clerk/ Cllr Carroll will be checking that the areas have been mown once a fortnight, and chasing immediately if they have not.

Furthermore, a recent inspection of the cemetery by the Clerk and Cll Carroll following a complaint about the mowing, revealed that some areas of the cemetery are becoming overgrown because they are not included within the scope of the mowing contract. The Council has a responsibility to properly maintain the cemetery.

Recommendations

The Clerk requests permission to obtain quotations to carry out the following necessary tidying/ maintenance tasks. Under each task photographs show the extent of the problem, and a suggestion is given as to how this task can be managed after the initial work has been carried out (subject to Council approval).

(i) Closed churchyard – clear the ivy from the slope adjacent to the stank after the area has been strimmed in July. (This was a wildflower area but the shade from the trees has caused it to become overgrown with ivy and then weeds in the spring/ summer).

Options for managing the task longer term:

Once the area has been cleared the Council will need to agree how to manage this area. Options might include planting shade-loving perennials for ground cover OR paying to clear the area once a year. The possible options will depend upon the condition of the are and how it responds once cleared.



The second photo (taken early spring 2021) shows the ivy that has taken hold beneath the weeds.

(ii) Closed cemetery - clear the 2 metre area in front of the southern and western walls which has become overgrown with brambles, ivy and laurels.

Managing the task longer term:

Once these areas have been cleared they should revert to wildflower areas, and can be reincorporated back into the area trimmed as part of the mowing contract.



Southern wall – laurels are regrowing amongst the vegetation.



Western wall – the area from the grave stones back to the wall (1.5 – 2ms wide) is overgrown with brambles and ivy.

(iii) Open cemetery – clear the overgrown weedy area on the southern wall, adjacent to the church.

Managing the task longer term:

Once this area has been cleared it will not be time-consuming to keep on top of it. Managing this area can be incorporated into the task list for a future 'village orderly/ handyperson'. Funding has been put aside in the budget for this post and the Council should be in a position to recruit in autumn 2021.

In the interim period the clerk/ Cllr Carroll can visit once a month to do a quick tidy up.



The weeds are covering the established trees and shrubs and growing down over the wall.

(iv) Open cemetery – clear the overgrown weedy area in the corner of the northern wall, adjacent to the paupers' grave.

Managing the task longer term:

Once this area has been cleared it will not be time-consuming to keep on top of it. Managing this area can be incorporated into the task list for a future 'village orderly/ handyperson'. Funding has been put aside in the budget for this post and the Council should be in a position to recruit in autumn 2021.

In the interim period the clerk/ Cllr Carroll can visit once a month to do a quick tidy up.



(v) Open cemetery – clear all overgrown graves and areas between graves in the old section of the open cemetery (between the new noticeboard and the southern wall by the church).

No photo.

Managing the task longer term:

Once this area has been cleared it will not be time-consuming to keep on top of it. Managing this area can be incorporated into the task list for a future 'village orderly/ handyperson'. Funding has been put aside in the budget for this post and the Council should be in a position to recruit in autumn 2021.

In the interim period the clerk/ Cllr Carroll can visit once a month to do a quick tidy up.

It is also suggested that the gravedigger is asked to dispose of all excess soil over the wall in the corner of Park Field to keep Gunston's corner free of debris.

Appendix 1

Wickwar Parish Council

Use of a community venue for Parish Council Meeting

DRAFT Risk Assessment

Please note – This risk assessment has been prepared based upon using Wickwar Community Centre (school hall) and will need to be adapted accordingly if an alternative venue is used.

Key Principle or area or people at Risk	Government Guidance	Risk Assessment	Mitigation/Conclusion
Hall Clerk, councillors and public	The Latest Government Advice National Lockdown - to stay home unless essential reason to leave house. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, restrictions) England Regulation 2020. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings?mc_cid=ceabafa02c&mc_eid=e02490a233 https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests	Consider the entrance and entry times (previous group finish at 7.30). Ensure participants wait outside until 7.45 to cut down on close contact with other users. Ensure no one enters with signs or symptoms of Covid 19 or for have been in contact with any one with Covid 19. Public need to have access to meeting. There will be a need to manage numbers within the hall. To ensure that social	Clerk, councillors and public to enter via Community Centre entrance. Clerk to enter at 7.30 to set up room. Councillors and public to queue outside (2 metre distancing) and doors will be opened at 7.40pm. Hand sanitiser to be used immediately on entering the lobby area. Signage on the entrance door (referring to declaration sheet – see below). A Covid 19 declaration sheet to be completed by Councillors via email by 7pm on date of meeting. Spare copies will be available for completion at the meeting. Declaration sheet available to be completed by public with contact details. (Available on table in lobby with posting box – Cllr/ Clerk to check and remind MOPs to do this)

		distancing can be achieved.	Advise all councillors, Clerk and public to take a lateral flow test ahead of the meeting. These can be ordered by using this link. https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests (link on agenda with note to inform clerk 24 hours before meeting, as a courtesy, if intending to attend/ speak) Windows to be opened to allow ventilation. Councillors to sit at least 2m apart and not use any tables. Masks to be always worn except for when a councillor is speaking. The mask may be removed for this purpose. Public access to be restricted if more than x members of the public wish to attend. Public to enter for public questions and for the item of interest. Public to wear masks always unless addressing the council. The Clerk to have a small table for laptop. All paperwork to be sent in advance and to be returned via post. (Cllrs to download on to own device in advance or print own copies)
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			Meeting length limited to one hour to minimise time spent indoors.
Social Distancing	The Health Protection (Coronavirus, restrictions) England Regulation 2020. Put in place measures to support social distancing – 2m.	2m social distances to be always adhered to. Air can be contaminated with the virus inside confined spaces. good air circulation to be maintained. Consider location of the Clerks, councillors and the public to ensure social distancing of a t least 1m. Manage numbers within the hall to ensure social distancing can be maintained.	Wait here unless asked to enter clearly displayed at the entrance. Advisory signage on Social Distancing and the wearing of masks, to be displayed at entrance. Ensure all available windows and doors can be opened. Masks made available at the entrance and to be always worn inside the hall unless exempt or when addressing the council. Clerk to set up workstation away from councillors and public. Chairs for councillors to be laid out in horseshoe 2m apart. X public chairs spaced 2m apart. Public access to be restricted. Public to enter for public questions and for the item of interest. Public to listen in and view meeting through the open window. Councillors and public to remain seated throughout the meeting unless leaving the meeting.

Cleaning and Hygiene	The Health Protection (Coronavirus, restrictions) England Regulation 2020.	Consider high risk touch points door handles, light switches, window catches, tables, chairs and other equipment used to be cleaned by the Clerk before and after used. Check with the Community Centre management the cleaning status of the hall. No items with soft furnishings to be used.	Signage asking all visitors not to touch the surroundings. Hand Sanitiser to be made available at the entrance. Disposable gloves to be made available. A bin to be provided and the Clerk to dispose of all rubbish. The area used to be cleaned before and after use with disinfectant or bleach. Councillors to clean own chairs before and after use. Water available in the kitchen area of the room area. Disabled toilet to be used if required. All areas are touched to be cleaned after the meeting.
Keeping Staff Safe	The Health Protection (Coronavirus, restrictions) England Regulation 2020. 'Safer workplaces' guidance should be considered. Consider the risks staff may be exposed to and how these can be mitigated.	Covid 19 Secure protocol to be followed. Items brought into the bar area to be kept to a minimum.	Use of 1 table and 1 chair. A tray for paperwork to be placed in. Clerks' laptop for reference purposes. Full Personal Protective Equipment PPE to be provided for the Clerk.

		Consider safety of Clerk whilst cleaning the area.	Gloves, sanitiser, disinfectant/bleach, plastic apron and dustpan and brush and rubbish collection bag to be provided. Hand sanitiser, masks and gloves available on desk. The clerk to use clean gloves. No sharing of pens. Spare pens to be provided if necessary but not returned to clerk after use by another person. Lanyards with staff details to be worn by Clerk.
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1. Conclusions

Draft risk assessment undertaken by Clerk Rachel Davis 18th June 2021 in line with the Government Guidance on that date.

The Risk Assessment to be kept up to date with the latest Government Guidance as it becomes available.