

Item 10. Correspondence & Clerks Report

1. Coronavirus - Temporary Amendments to Legislation

To enable Local Authorities (including Parish Council's) to continue to operate within the Law a section on "Local Authority Meetings" was included within the Coronavirus Act (2020). Section 78 allows the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to issue a Statutory Instrument to make temporary changes to existing primary legislation.

The first Statutory Instrument titled "*The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (S.I 2020 No.392)*" came into force on April 4th 2020 and runs until May 7th 2021. Amongst other provisions it allows for "Remote attendance" by way of video or conference call which I am investigating for future meetings.

Regulation 6(c) removes the requirement for a parish council to hold an annual meeting in May 2020

Regulation 4 (2) which reads "*Where an appointment would otherwise be made or require to be made at an annual meeting of a local authority, such appointment continues until the next annual meeting of the authority or until such time as that authority may determine*", carries the current appointment of chairman and all other appointments on until the Annual Meeting in May 2021 (although our meeting will need to be brought forward to between May 1st and May 7th 2021 unless the end date of the Statutory Instrument is altered).

2. Coronavirus – NFDC

NFDC have compiled a database of initial contacts for each Town & Parish Council within the district to help them with any activities that the Hampshire Local Resilience Forum might ask them to undertake. This includes work relating to the Central Government programmes for supporting and shielding vulnerable residents. For Copythorne Parish Council I am that initial contact (as our many of my fellow parish clerks for their parishes).

3. New Inn Road, Bartley – In response to my question to HCC Highways about the likely timescale for New Inn Road to benefit from a future resurfacing scheme I have received the following reply, "*I am afraid that it is not possible to provide a time scale in which we will carry out any maintenance. We use condition data to drive our surface treatment and surface replacement programmes. This ensures that common criteria compare all roads across Hampshire and only those that meet the criteria will receive funding for work. Currently, and despite the localized defects at the northern end of New Inn Road, the condition has not deteriorated more generally and therefore does not justify funding for treatment or surface replacement. Every road is inspected regularly and will be kept in a safe condition until the general condition justifies planned work to be carried out, when you will be notified.*"

4. HALC – Officers Update (April 2nd 2020) – This training session was undertaken as a "virtual meeting". Topics included an update on new employment contracts; dealing with "traveller encampments; and a general Q&A session on conducting council business during the Coronavirus pandemic.

5. Hampshire Minibus Event 2020 (May 20th 2020) – This event that the Clerk and Cllr. Chillcott were to attend has been cancelled. It is hoped that it will be rescheduled for later in the year.

6. Matters reported to HCC – Attached is a list of matters reported by the Clerk to HCC. Also included are matters reported by councillors or residents who have then supplied the reference number to me.

7. Advisory Committees – All meetings have been postponed for the present.

(...Cont'd.)

8. **Playground & Visual Inspections** – On Tuesday March 24th 2020, acting under guidance received from HM Government in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the playground was padlocked and signs erected advising that it would be closed until further notice. The last visual inspection of the playground took place on Wednesday March 18th 2020. Having contacted our insurers on March 24th 2020, I was advised that currently there is a requirement for a visual inspection to take place every 4 weeks (our existing inspection regime is weekly) which would mean the next required inspection was due by Wednesday April 15th. The insurers have since advised the following:-

“In instances which playgrounds and amusement devices are in a fenced area which has been locked and a sign attached stating the playground is closed, these would be considered outside of use and therefore we would not require inspection by a competent person. We would however still suggest that the facilities are checked to ensure locks are still in place, and there is no evidence that the playground has been used. In situations in which the playground or amusement devices cannot be made secure (i.e. could still be accessed), then the inspection requirement is extended to 8 weeks, as checks should still be carried out to help ensure the safety of any children that might access the equipment. In situations where the usual competent person is deemed vulnerable, during the additional period granted, the council should find an alternative competent person to carry out these checks.”

Given the relatively low height of the fence I consider that the playground cannot be made secure. So unless the position changes again, the playground will need to have a visual inspection undertaken by May 13th 2020.

DAVID RIGBY
Parish Clerk
April 9th 2020

