

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Much Hadham Parish Council virtual meeting held on Tuesday,
21st July 2020 at 7:30 pm.

*Cllr I Hunt (Vice Chair)

*Cllr Mrs J Liversage

Cllr Mrs H Maduhu

Cllr D McDonald

*Cllr B O'Neill

*Cllr S Smith

*Cllr Mrs P Taylor (Chair)

*Cllr K Twort

* denotes present

In attendance: F Forth, Parish Clerk and no members of the public.

Prior to the meeting starting, the Chair welcomed Jon Watt, Ringway and Mark Burrows, Ducreux Limited, the experts in relation to the street lighting project.

20/103. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and approved from Cllr Mrs H Maduhu and Cllr D McDonald.

Cllr Mrs J Liversage arrived just as item 20/106 started.

20/104. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None.

20/105. RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

None.

20/106. STREET LIGHTING

(i) Business Case

The Chair highlighted that the Business Case had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Clerk was thanked for producing it.

Cllr B O'Neill, leading on this project, stated that improving the lighting within the parish had been in progress for a number of years. If approval was given for a loan to be sought tonight, it would mean that this project could be completed far quicker. In his view, a good price had been obtained and it would be money well spent.

Cllr B O'Neill reiterated that the main objective of the project was to keep the cost low whilst improving lighting. This reflected in the decision to have standard columns as opposed to heritage columns as the latter would increase the project cost by £16,000. This increased cost would require an increase in the precept and would penalise those residents that would not benefit directly from the project, for example, in the hamlets.

In addition, Cllr B O'Neill reported that he had been in contact with eight heritage charities to ask whether these charities would consider bridging the funding gap in this project if heritage columns were used. None of these charities would, with the general message being that standard columns will look fine.

Cllr B O'Neill also highlighted that standard columns require minimum maintenance and will look good for a long period of time. It had been noticed that the lights installed in Ash Meadow were looking tired, but not bad for nearly 40 years old.

Finally, Cllr B O'Neill reported that if a loan is used to complete the lighting project, it will enable the Parish Council to pass responsibility for the lighting to Herts County Council much sooner, and thereby make huge savings with no lighting costs from April 2021 onwards.

In discussing the project, the following points were made:

- timeline: once the project order is placed directly with Ringway, project completion is estimated to be 16 weeks from that date therefore should be completed prior to March 2021. Specifically, there is a 12-week lead in time to obtain the lanterns but during this time, the redundant columns could be removed. It was noted that the current pandemic had impacted on resources and lead in times;
- old columns: providing the column came out in one piece, these columns could be delivered to a local storage site for subsequent resale. However, there wouldn't be a reduction in the overall cost of the project - removal and scrappage cost estimated at around £77 per column;
- cost: the cost is correct at this point in time although it is likely that there could be savings once the project starts as the project has been costed on the basis of the worst reasonable cost price. It was already noted that the quote for the Londis light was cheaper than that included within the project's estimate;
- liaison during the project: Ringway confirmed that there would be an on-site supervisor to ensure the project ran smoothly and that all Ringway staff are used to dealing with members of the public. It was agreed that Cllr B O'Neill would be the local community liaison point;
- impact on the community: in general, there will be two vehicles operating and, providing the width of the road is more than 5 metres, cones will be set up for traffic and pedestrians. If less than 5 metres, then temporary traffic lights might be required. Changing a lantern will be around 30 minutes and changing columns will be longer and probably require two visits – one to take the old column out and one to install the new column. The intention will be to walk round the sites in advance to identify potential hazards to the work, for example, where cars need to be moved, or

overhanging trees need to be cut. If an issue develops during the project implementation phase, Ringway will move off site until the issue is resolved. There is no expectation that any part of the High Street or B1004 would need to be closed; and

- what could go wrong: uncharted utilities, gas, water, fibre etc, could be found although onsite CAT scans are undertaken to make sure all utilities are known of. Delays could be caused by public abuse of Ringway staff, the need for cars to be moved or poor weather. These delays do not result in any additional cost to the Parish Council.

Jon Watt, Ringway reiterated that they are experienced in undertaking this work and it is undertaken to the high standard required by Herts County Council.

The Clerk reported that an additional paragraph was required in the Business Case, in relation to the public consultation section, as Cllr B O'Neill had responded to individuals that had asked specific questions in relation to lights near them. The proposed wording was: 4.9: Some responses were also received querying the reasons behind the action being taken in relation to specific lights and explanations were provided directly to these respondents.

RESOLVED to approve the draft Business Case for the Much Hadham Parish Lighting Project.

Note: after the meeting, the summary was updated to reflect this decision: "This Business Case was approved by the Parish Council on 21st July 2020 (Minute ref: 20/106 (i))."

(ii) Borrowing approval

The Chair highlighted that the Business Case that had just been approved underpinned the proposal to apply for a loan.

RESOLVED to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government to apply for a PWLB loan of £40,000 over the borrowing term of 10 years for the purpose of the Much Hadham Parish Lighting Project. The repayments of the loan and interest will be approximately £4,428 and it is not intended to increase the council tax precept for the purpose of the loan repayments.

20/107. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday 4th August 2020, at 7:30 pm. Arrangements to be confirmed but likely to be in the same format as tonight if restrictions are not lifted. Any suggestions for improvement on the meeting format can be sent to the Clerk.

The Chair thanked Jon Watt, Ringway and Mark Burrows, Ducreux Limited, for attending the meeting and their contributions. There being no further business the meeting closed at 7:58 pm.