

**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**Draft MINUTES** of the proceedings of the Extraordinary Meeting of Washington Parish Council on Monday 16 March 2020

**PRESENT**: Cllr Hanvey, Cllr Henderson (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Heeley (Chairman), Cllr and Cllr Lockerbie

**ALSO**: Clerk to the Council Zoe Savill

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**: 0

**ABSENT: 3**

**The Meeting was opened at 19:45 hours**

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| **20.70. To consider accepting Apologies for Absence**  Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Beglan, Cllr Buddell and Cllr Woods.  The Chairman explained the purpose of this meeting due to the uncertainty in respect of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and in order to limit any risk to members of the public, elected Members or the Clerk and notwithstanding any relative Government legislation or advice from relevant medical or any public body pertaining to best and safe practice, the following items will be discussed as part of an ongoing contingency plan and to ensure the smooth running and operation (wherever possible) of the Parish Council over the interim period.  **20.71. To Record Declarations of Interest from members in any item to be discussed and Agree Dispensations.**  None declared |
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| **20.72. Public Speaking Time.**  There were no members of the public present. |
| **20.73. To Discuss and Consider a resolution to suspend all Council and Committee Meetings in response to Government safety advice on the Coronavirus pandemic** Councillors considered the Local Government Act 1972 which requires them to be physically present and quorate at a meeting in order to make decisions. The Chairman reported that given the declared pandemic, Government advice on social distancing, and the number of Councillors who will be required to self-isolate, that this constituted exceptional times to warrant the suspension of the Council’s usual meetings. The Clerk advised that the Annual Parish Meeting could be postponed and called by the Electorate but the Annual Parish Council Meeting is a core meeting and required to take place in person.  **RESOLVED** unanimously to suspend all Council and Committee Meetings and the Annual Parish Meeting until further notice, in the interests of public safety, and the safety of staff and members AND if required, to defer the Annual Parish Council Meeting until May 2021 in line with postponement of other Local Authority elections.   * 1. **To Discuss and Consider a resolution to suspend Standing Orders to give delegated authority to the Clerk to ensure business continuity during the Coronavirus pandemic**   Councillors considered an alternative decision-making process so that essential Council business can continue to be conducted with minimum disruption during the pandemic and suspension of meetings. The SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) advise that the lawful way to do this is that a decision that would otherwise have been on the agenda for a committee or Council, is made by an officer or the Clerk. Councillors agreed this should be in consultation with the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman/or Councillor. The Clerk advised that in the SLCC’s view, this does not create a committee of 2 members and does not therefore need to meet.  To ensure that this remains inclusive of elected members, the clerk is advised in her decision-making to seek the views of members of the Committee/Council either by email, SKYPE, telephone but preferably by means to allow a permanent record. The Chairman proposed this delegated authority and decision-making process. It was seconded by the Vice-Chairman and unanimously **AGREED** by Councillors.  **To Discuss and Consider reporting of the Financial Year End and Approving the AGAR**  The Clerk reported that as a smaller council with fewer transactions, the internal audit on the 30 April could possibly by achieved electronically rather than face-to face. After the completion of accounts at the close of the financial year (31 March) they must be certified by the Council’s Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), considered and approved by Full Council no later than 29 June and published by 30 September. The Clerk advised of the requirement for this meeting to be held in person, either at Full Council or an extraordinary meeting.  **RESOLVED** to await further advice on Government legislation on the Year End process AND to find out if the audit can be held electronically. Clerk to action. |

**The Meeting closed at** **20.10 hrs**

**Signed………………………………..**

**Dated………………………………….**