



Congleton Town Council

Historic Market Town

Chief Officer: David McGifford CILCA

Congleton Town Council

Agenda of the meeting of the COVID 19 Emergency Powers Committee

Thursday 9th April 2020 at 2.00pm via Zoom
Meeting ID: 881 533 426

1. **Apologies** for absence.

2. **Minutes** (Enclosed)

To approve the Minutes of the meeting of the Council on 20th February 2020.

3. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest**

Members are requested to declare both "non pecuniary" and "pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become aware of it.

4. **Community & Environment Committee** (Enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2020.

5. **Finance & Policy Committee** (Enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 13th February 2020.

6. **Planning Committee** (Enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meetings held on 6th February 2020.

7. **COVID 19 update** (Enclosed)

To receive updates relating to the COVID 19 projects.

8. **Legality of Virtual Meetings (Nalc)** (Enclosed)

To discuss the Town Council's approach for future meetings.

Congleton
beartown
where friends are made

Congleton Town Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 20th February 2020 Town Hall Congleton

PRESENT:

Sally Ann Holland (Town Mayor)
Dawn Allen
Duncan Amies
Martin Amies
David Brown
Russell Chadwick
Robert Douglas
Suzy Firkin
George Hayes
Robert Hemsley
Amanda Martin
Rob Moreton
Denis Murphy (Deputy Mayor)
Jean Parry
Mark Rogan
James Smith
Kay Wesley

1. **Apologies** for absence. (Members are respectfully reminded of the necessity to submit any apologies for absence in advance and to give a reason for non attendance).

Apologies were received from Cllrs, Suzanne Akers Smith, Paul Duffy and Margaret Gartside.

2. **Minutes**

To approve the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 23rd January 2020.

CTC/59/1920 RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 23rd January 2020 be approved and signed by the Town Mayor.

3. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest**

Members are requested to declare both "non pecuniary" and "pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become aware of it.

Councillors David Brown, Sally Ann Holland, George Hayes, Rob Moreton and Denis Murphy declared a non- pecuniary interest in any matters relating to Cheshire East Council.

4. **Outstanding Actions**

None.

5. Questions from Members of the Public

To receive any questions from Members of the Public including those received in writing 7 days prior to the meeting.

1. Question from Mr Maurice Walker - Cutbacks by Cheshire East Council

See Appendix A for full question and response.

6. Mayor's Announcements

The Town Mayor drew attention to the various engagements that she had fulfilled since the last Council meeting.

7. Youth Committee

To receive questions and updates from members of the Youth Committee present at the meeting.

There were no questions or updates from the Youth Committee

8. Finance & Policy Committee

CTC/60/1920 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th January 2020 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

9. Planning Committee

CTC/61/1920 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2020 be received, and the recommendations therein be adopted.

10. Council and Committee Meeting Dates 2020/21

To approve the proposed calendar of Council and Committee meeting dates for 2020/21.

CTC/62/1920 RESOLVED to approve the proposed calendar of meetings for 2020/21

11. Plastic Free Congleton

To give formal support to Plastic Free Congleton.

CTC/63/1920 RESOLVED to give formal support for the Plastic Free Congleton initiative.

12. Constitutional Change – Standing Orders 7 and 8 Voting

To approve a proposal to change Standing Orders 7 and 8 – Voting.

CTC/64/1920 RESOLVED to approve the proposed changes to standing Order 7 and 8.

13. Urgent Items

Members may raise urgent items but no discussion or decisions may be taken at the meeting.

There were no urgent items raised

14 Cheshire East Councillors' Reports

To suspend Standing Orders to allow Councillors from the principal authority to report on relevant issues and to receive questions from members.

Verbal updates were provided by the Town Mayor, Sally Ann Holland, and Ward Members George Hayes and Rob Moreton.

**Cllr Mrs Sally Ann Holland
(Town Mayor)**

Appendix A

Questions from Members of the Public

1. Question from Mr Maurice Walker - Cutbacks by Cheshire East Council

What is the Council's intention to the action being taken by Cheshire East council to withdraw gritting operations to certain roads in the Congleton area? I am sure it is not in the best interests of residents of our town to be subjected to untreated roads, children being put at risk and cycling and pedestrians left wanting. Why should the residents of Congleton be subjected to these cuts in areas that have significant vehicle usage at peak times and not treated, will result in major incidents occurring?

Response from the Mayor

Dear Mr Walker

We have been advised that due to pressure from Councils like ourselves, Cheshire East Council is reviewing its decision with regards to the gritting routes.

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 30th January 2020

PRESENT:

Committee members:

Dawn Allen (Vice Chair)
Martin Amies
Suzy Firkin
Margaret Gartside
Amanda Martin
Denis Murphy (Deputy Mayor)
Jean Parry
Mark Rogan

Non-Committee members

Suzie Akers Smith
Sally Ann Holland (Town Mayor)
Rob Moreton

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Committee members Councillors Kay Wesley (Chair) and Paul Duffy and non-committee member Councillor Robert Douglas.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2019 as a correct record.

CE/41/1920 Resolved to receive the minutes from the meeting held on 7th November 2019 as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members are requested to declare both "pecuniary" and "non-pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become known.

Cheshire East Councillors Suzie Akers Smith, Sally Ann Holland and Rob Moreton declared an interest as Cheshire East Councillors.

4. Outstanding Actions

Note that these actions are covered in Agenda Item 8 - Updates paper from 7th November 2019.

5. Questions from Members of the Public

To receive any questions from Members of the Public including those received in writing 7 days prior to the meeting. There was a question from John Saville Crowther on dog fouling.

The question and response can be seen in Appendix A

6. Cheshire Police

Received a verbal report from a representative of Cheshire Police on Policing matters affecting Congleton.

PC Iain Bell from Cheshire Police provided updates on:

- Two Congleton PCSOs have left and are training as PCs – this has meant the beat teams are short staffed, but recruitment plans are in place
- A person is being charged with theft from motor vehicles - this should go to court soon.
- No major incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour in the Town
- Had a good result from local intelligence in closing down a cannabis farm
- PC Helen Weeks has had received a lot of praise for the Safe Project working on positive interaction with young people
- Inspector Kelly Johnston has started as the new Inspector for Congleton, taking over from Inspector Penny Jones who has retired.

7. Plastic Free Congleton

To receive a report with recommendations on actions Congleton Town Council should take to help Congleton become an accredited Plastic Free Town.

CE/42/1920 Resolved to recommend to Council that it passes a resolution to support Plastic Free Congleton on its journey to achieve Plastic Free Status.

ACTIONS: Cllr Margaret Gartside to represent the Council on Plastic Free Congleton
Create a plan to removal or replacement of at least 3 items of single use plastic from Council managed premises
Create and publicise a list on the web site of recycling and terracycling sites
Assist Plastic Free Congleton to find Terracycling Sites in Congleton
Assist in at least two litter picks
Assess adequacy of litter bins – especially around waterways

8. Updates Paper from 7th November 2019 CES Committee

To receive an updates paper highlighting issues raised at the previous Community, Environment & Services Committee meeting.

CE/43/1920 Resolved to note the updates.

9. Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group

To receive the notes of the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group held on 24th October 2019.

CE/44/1920 Resolved to receive the notes of the meeting

10. Health and Well Being Working Group

To receive the notes of the Health and Well-Being Group held on 24th October 2019.

CE/45/1920 Resolved to receive the notes of the meeting.

11. Congleton in Bloom Group

To receive the notes of the Congleton in Bloom group held on the 3rd December 2019 and to receive an update on news for the 2020 competitions.

CE/46/1920 Resolved to receive the notes of the meeting and the update on the involvement of the group in the National Finals.

12. Congleton Events Calendar for 2020

To receive and discuss a report of events planned for Congleton in 2020 including some details on the groups leading on the events.

CE/47/1920 Resolved to note the report.

**Cllr Dawn Allen
(Vice Chair)**

APPENDIX ONE – Letter from John Saville Crowther to CE Committee

I would like to bring this Committee's attention to the disgusting issue of dog mess on our pavements and public spaces, and to ask for your support in stamping out this revolting practice by ignorant dog owners and walkers.

The other day, I went to collect my child from Congleton High School, as the weather was bad. While I was waiting for my child, there were lots of school children leaving school onto Box Lane towards Sandbach Road. I noticed that some of the children had discovered that they had trodden in dog mess on Box Lane near the traffic lights. I found it rather distressing to see them all wiping their shoes on the grass in the bad weather. As you can appreciate this is unavoidable when children are so distracted by talking to each other instead of watching where they are walking.

Some children may have trodden this into school, walking through the Main Hall to get to their classrooms and at lunch time the Main Hall is used for lunch breaks and some children accidentally drop their lunch on the floor. I am really angry, we shouldn't have to put up with this disgusting behaviour from so few in our town?

I feel for the parents when the children arrive home, some will just walk straight into their homes not realising they have dog dirt on their shoes.

I would like this Committee to consider this issue and let us know what can be done. I know I am not alone in being appalled by this behaviour, just last week there was a letter in the Chronicle and there have been numerous posts on social media.

Response to letter by John Saville Crowther

Congleton Town Council shares your frustration. It is illegal to fail to clear up after your dog under the Cleaner Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2015 – as well as disgusting and creating an unnecessary hazard.

As a Town Council we run campaigns to encourage people to clear up after their dog. We provide and empty over 160 public bins across the town to make it easier for people to dispose of waste properly. Dog waste can be placed in the ordinary public bins and well as the specific dog- bins. We provide anti-dog fouling posters and spray stencils and can speak to groups and organisations about the issues of dog fouling and help to run localised campaigns. We have installed three dog bag dispensers in the town centre to help reduce the issue of dog walkers who have 'run out of bags'.

Although the Town Council carries out street cleansing work in the area, it is not feasible to attend every call requesting someone comes out to remove a single piece of fouling near their home. In the Box Lane, we have put up signs to help warn the parents and children who attend Congleton High school that there is dog fouling in the area so please take care when walking to and from school.

We also work closely with the Cheshire East Wardens. The wardens have the powers to issue £100 fixed penalty notices to people not clearing up after their dog. If the public are aware of regular offenders they can contact the wardens with times, locations and a description of the dog and owner, and then the wardens can make targeted efforts to carry out enforcement in the area. The dog wardens can be contacted on 0300 123 5021 or wardens@cheshireeast.gov.uk

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee Meeting held on Thursday 13th February 2020

PRESENT Committee members,

David Brown
Russell Chadwick (Vice Chair)
Robert Douglas (Chair)
Rob Moreton
Jean Parry
Mark Rogan
James Smith
Paul Duffy
Sally Ann Holland (Town Mayor)

Non Committee members

Martin Amies
Suzy Firkin
Amanda Martin
Kay Wesley
Robert Hemsley

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Committee member Cllr Duncan Amies and Non-Committee member Cllr Denis Murphy.

2. Minutes

FAP/50/1920 RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16th January 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members are requested to declare both "pecuniary" and "non-pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become known.

Cllrs D Brown, S A Holland & R Moreton declared a non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to Cheshire East Council; Cllrs S Holland and K Wesley declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 7 (ii) grant application for Congleton Pride charitable trust; Cllr A Martin declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 7(i) grant application for Friends of Congleton Park and Cllr D Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 7 (iii) grant application for Trinity Methodist Church.

4. Outstanding Actions

None.

5. Questions from Members of the Public

To receive any questions from Members of the Public including those received in writing 7 days prior to the meeting

There were no questions from members of the public.

6. Grant Approvals and Commitments 2019/20

To receive a statement showing the current position to 31st January 2020.

FAP/51/1920 RESOLVED that the grant statement be received.

7. New Applications for Financial Assistance

FAP/52/1920 RESOLVED that the following grants be approved:

- **Grant ref GR23/1920 – Friends of Congleton Park**
 - £200
- **Grant ref GR24/1920 – Congleton Pride Charitable Trust**
 - £700
- **Grant ref GR25/1920 – Trinity Methodist Church – Cllr D Brown left the room during the discussion**
 - Deferred until evidence of 2 quotes received
- **Grant ref GR26/1920 – Congleton Park Bowling Club**
 - £200
- **Grant ref GR27/1920 – Inner Trust CIC**
 - Deferred to request more detail of the match funding and to invite them to the next meeting.

8. New Grant Activities Monitoring Forms

There were no New Grant Activities Monitoring Forms to be reviewed.

9. Management Accounts

FAP/53/1920 RESOLVED to receive the Management Accounts to 31st December 2019.

10. Bank Reconciliation

FAP/54/1920 RESOLVED to receive the bank reconciliation as at 31st January 2020.

11. Savings Account Balances

FAP/55/1920 RESOLVED to receive the Savings Account balances as at 31st January 2020.

12. List of Payments

FAP/56/1920 RESOLVED to approve the List of Payments between 1st December 2019 and 31st January 2020.

13. Interim Internal Audit Report

FAP/57/1920 RESOLVED to receive and approve the Interim Internal Audit Report 19/20.

14. Business Risk Assessment

FAP/58/1920 RESOLVED to receive and approve the Business Risk Assessment for 2020/21.

15. Equality & Inclusion Policy

FAP/59/1920 RESOLVED to receive and approve the new Equality and Inclusion Policy.

Cllr Robert Douglas
Chair

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 6th FEBRUARY 2020

PRESENT

Councillor P Duffy – Chair
D Amies
M Amies
D T Brown
R Chadwick
R Douglas
M Gartside
S Firkin
G Hayes
R Hemsley
A Martin
R Moreton
D Murphy
J D Parry
M Rogan
J Smith
K Wesley

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors S Akers Smith, S A Holland

2. MINUTES

PLN/26/1920 RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 29th November 2019 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were reminded to declare both “non pecuniary” and “pecuniary” interests as early in the meeting as they become known.

Councillors Brown, Hayes, Moreton and Murphy declared a “non pecuniary” interest due to their membership of Cheshire East Council.

Councillor Duffy declared a “non pecuniary” interest in any discussions relating to Galloway Green.

4. OUTSTANDING ITEMS

None to report.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received

6. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

PLN/27/1920 RESOLVED: That the following comments be made to Cheshire East Borough Council:

Planning Reference	Location	Declaration of Interest	Comments
1 * 20/0091C	48, LEEK ROAD, CONGLETON, CW12 3HU		Noted that prior approval not required
2 20/0047C	The Shippon, 15, SILVER STREET, CONGLETON, CW12 3GT		No Objection
3 19/5766C	Land At, Back Lane, Congleton, CW12 4RB		Withdrawn – no comments
4 * 20/0082C	White Lodge, 19 Cedar Court, Congleton, CW12 3JP	NP – G Hayes	OBJECT on the basis of losing trees and hedgerows
5 * 20/0156D	Land North Of Back Lane, CONGLETON		No Objection
6 * 19/5929C	11, SWEET BRIAR COURT, ASTBURY, CW12 4GY		No Objection
7 19/5125C	135 Ennerdale Drive, Congleton, CW12 4FL		Decision made by Cheshire East
8 20/0198T	Land Opposite Bath Vale Works, BATH VALE, CONGLETON		No Objection

9 * 20/0190C	ST JOHNS COMMUNITY CHURCH HALL, BUXTON OLD ROAD, CONGLETON, CHESHIRE, CW12 2ES	NP – A Martin G Hayes	No Objection
10 * 20/0189C	MOUNTBATTEN HOUSE, STONEHOUSE GREEN, CONGLETON, CHESHIRE, CW12 1DF		No Objection
11 * 20/0191C	MOUNTBATTEN HOUSE, STONEHOUSE GREEN, CONGLETON, CW12 1DF		No Objection
12 * 20/0282C	NORTH RODE TIMBER, BARK STREET, CONGLETON, CW12 1EP		No Objection – subject to noting that we would like to emphasise the Archaeological report
13 * 20/0247C	91, LOWER HEATH, CONGLETON, CHESHIRE, CW12 1NJ		No Objection
14 * 20/0308C	8 , Stirling Close, Congleton, CW12 4US		No Objection
15 * 20/0355D	Tall Ash Farm, 112, BUXTON ROAD, CONGLETON, CHESHIRE, CW12 2DY		For information only
16 * 20/0311C	6, TIDNOCK AVENUE, CONGLETON, CW12 2HW		No Objection
17 * 20/0283C	19, TUDOR WAY, CONGLETON, CW12 4AS		No Objection
18 * 20/0302C	TESCO, BARN ROAD, CONGLETON, CW12 1LR		No Objection
19 * 20/0329C	69 ,Newcastle Road, Congleton, CW12 4HL		No Objection
20 20/0431T	16, CRESCENT ROAD, CONGLETON, CW12 4BG		No Objection

21 * 20/0408C	138, BIDDULPH ROAD, CONGLETON, CHESHIRE, CW12 3LY		No Objection
22 * 20/0404C	Land West Of, PADGBURY LANE, CONGLETON		No Objection
23 * 20/0383C	159 Longdown Road Congleton CW12 4QT		No Objection
24 19/5793C	NOBANNO RESTAURANT, ASTBURY LAKE, NEWCASTLE ROAD, ASTBURY, CW12 4HL		OBJECT for the following reasons – Nature conservation Impact on the landscape of local beauty spot Loss of trees Highways accessibility and safety issues
25 20/0049C	Wood Farm, WOOD LANE, CONGLETON, CW12 3PX	NP – R Moreton A Martin	No Objection
26 * 20/0373C	ONS GELUCK, 15A, FOL HOLLOW, ASTBURY, CW12 4HT		No Objection
27 * 20/0378C	4, BELGRAVE AVENUE, CONGLETON, CW12 1HS		No Objection
28 20/0358C	Oak Lea, CROUCH LANE, CONGLETON, CHESHIRE, CW12 3PT	NP – G Hayes R Moreton	No Objection
29 * 20/0020D	Siemens House, Varey Road, Congleton, CW12 1PH		No Objection

7. PLANNING APPEALS

None to Report

8. LICENSING APPLICATIONS

None to Report

9. **SECTION 106 UPDATES**

At the recent meeting with Cheshire East Council Planning that projects relating to open space and community use could be discussed with CEC open space / community officers so if a relevant application comes in they have knowledge of local expectations. Ideally projects need to be included within the Neighbourhood Plan this would carry greater weight. General infrastructure such as education, health and highways is the responsibility of CEC to plan these requirements, influencing highway works could be achieved if policies are included within the Neighbourhood Plan

Action: Chairman of the Planning Committee, Cllr P Duffy, to meet with the consultant who is supporting the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan

The monitoring of existing and future Section 106 contributions can be done via information available from the CEC Section 106 Officer – research on trigger points and delivery agreements needs to be undertaken then monitored and reported back to the committee. At this point we can raise our concerns back to CEC Planning Enforcement

Action: An initial meeting with the Section 106 Officer needs to be arranged

10. **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT ISSUES**

At the recent meeting with Cheshire East Council Planning they advised they have 9 enforcement officers. The most visible issue is with Morris Homes development at Astbury Place and the delivery of the bridge. Cheshire East Council have been advised that through the threat of legal action Morris Homes are now looking to discuss the delivery of the bridge.

Councillor P Duffy - Chair

ITEM 7 COVID19 CHIEF OFFICER UPDATE WEEK ENDING 5TH APRIL 2020

1. Provision of Food and supplies for residents in need – New Life Church (Stonehouse) and Town Hall Foodhub - Managed by Volunteers at NLC and CTC at the Town Hall

Town Hall Food Hub

This has been operating since the 23rd of March following a cry for help from a volunteer who was picking up individuals needs from the Facebook group. The volunteer was sourcing goods to try and match residents' needs and was operating from home but was running short of space operating from home. We were approached to see if we could help on Friday the 20th March and opened the doors of the Town Hall and help set up a temporary food hub observing guidelines on social distancing. This service is reliant on donations of food and goods from residents and organisations, as a result the service to residents is ad hoc and proving to be difficult to sustain. Donations of snacks such as Jaffa cakes crisps and biscuits have been received which have been distributed to frontline organisations and some nursing homes

New Life Church foodbank (Stonehouse)

We have connected into New Life Church who have operated a Foodbank for a reasonable period and have an effective system in place which includes referrals for people who need support and checks on volunteers, systems that will be incorporated into the Town Hall Foodhub. NLC rely on food donations and also purchase goods when available and provide a more regular food pack geared towards sustaining an individual or family for a longer period. NLC are also receiving funding donations to support their activity but have been restricted in their ability to purchase adequate stocks from local supermarkets

	29.3.20	5.4.20	12.4.20	19.4.20
CTH Foodhub				
One day food pack	180	0		
Snack packs	40	80		
Two day food pack	0	100		
NLC Foodbank				
Food packs to last a week	35	45		
New Life Church have had 75 referrals over the past 2 weeks equating to over 200 people (many are families with several children). In addition to they are taking fresh bread / fruit / vegetables out to the hostels in town (Eaton Court / Adulam Beech house / LOL / Bank Cottage / Westlands)				

Update

Both centres are now in a position where demand is outstripping supply and goods going out to residents is more ad hoc than before. Through the Town Council we have come to an agreement with Aldi to bulk buy basic foods to make up a food pack that will sustain individuals / families in most need – this is not a personal shopping service. We have now ordered sufficient goods which

will create approximately 40 food packs - average cost per pack £14.63 – Goods will arrive on Thursday 9th April.

Further alignment needs to take place between both centres in terms of procurement of supplies and distribution, the Town Councils role will be to facilitate this where possible whilst respecting the role of the volunteers

DONATION We have received a donation of £2,000 from Plus Dane towards supporting this type of activity

2. People Helping People - Managed by Cheshire East Council

The CEC system formally draws together all of the residents needs across the CE area and matches them to volunteers – its process is good in terms making sure all relevant volunteers are DBS checked and that the needs of the residents have been driven through a referral system, however there appears to be no immediate plans to work through local Town and Parish Councils I have sought clarity from Cheshire East to establish how the service they are offering will be delivered locally in practical terms and to also receive guidance on other matters

Update As of today 7.4.20 I have received no direct response to the request for information

3. Congleton Town Council Website - Managed by CTC

www.congleton-tc.gov.uk has a wealth of local information related to COVID 19 as well as national guidance and direction for support. It is worth you continually checking the website, it will be one of the main areas we will signpost residents and organisations to.

	29.3.20	5.4.20	12.4.20	19.4.20
Number of visits to the site	1690	1,153		
Number of unique visitors	1468	949		
Number of pages viewed	4,410	3,189		
Top pages				
General Coronavirus Page	742 (1)	651 (1)		
Home Page	565 (3)	569 (2)		
COVID- 19 Shopping page	671 (2)	420 (3)		
COVID-19 Getting-giving help	191 (6)	97(4)		
COVID -19 Hobbies	N/A	64 (5)		
COVID -19 Financial Help	304 (4)	62 (6)		
COVID -19 Stay Safe at Home	N/A	61 (7)		
COVID -19 FAQ	203 (5)			

4. Social media –Managed by CTC

Facebook: Congleton coronavirus (covid-19) community support group

This was originally set up on the 14th March by 2 local residents who brought this national platform into Congleton – it is very much a resident with a need being supported by a resident who can help – the site needs monitoring in terms of checking to see that the posts on the system for the right reasons .

Facebook – people needing support	29.3.20	5.4.20	12.4.20	19.4.20
Members (closed group)	2162	2,262 (+100)		
Posts	196	133		
Posts, Comments and Reactions		2,900		

5. Social media Congleton Town Council Facebook Account - Managed by CTC

This is the standard Town Council Facebook page

Facebook	29.3.20	5.4.20	12.4.20	19.4.20
Followers (open group)	1710	1730 (+20)		
Reach of messages	41,511	14,524		
Messages originated or shared	30	15		
Most read – Town Hall – Blue				
Views	17,000	7,300		
Reactions / comments	1,600	719		

6. Town Council Twitter Account – managed by CTC

Twitter	29.3.20	5.4.20	12.4.20	19.4.20
Followers	3189	3194 (+5)		
Number of Impressions	5,973	1600		
Messages originated	3	1		

7. Dedicated resident support line - Managed by CTC support provided by Councillors, staff and volunteers,

The resident support line had a soft launch on Wednesday 1st April to enable call handlers to familiarise themselves with the written response guidelines that will help with providing residents clear, consistent direction. The service will be manned from 11.00 am to 7.00pm 7 days a week.

	29.3.20	5.4.20	12.4.20	19.4.20
Calls received Total	0	3		
Food Shopping	0	2		
Medication	0	1		

Update The helpline has now been promoted via the Congleton Chronicle Social Media the website and on roadside banners

8. Finance

COVID 19 will have a nominal code and reporting will become refined as we progress

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Donation for Foodhub P Dane	2,000	Food Hub Imprest account	200.00
CTC allocation	TBA	Food Hub goods S Radcliffe	196.72
		Aldi bulk purchase for NLC and Foodhub	585.54
	2,000		982.26
Balance	1017.74		

With regards to the Town Council Contribution we need to agree –

1. An initial amount
2. Where this has been allocated from

Proposed that a recommendation is placed before the COVID 19 Group via the Chief Officer, RFO Chair and Vice Chair of Finance and Policy.

9. Decisions Made by the Mayors and Chairs COVID 19 Group via e-mail communication

7.4.20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To formally agree to receive donations from individuals and organisations as contributions towards support for the COVID 19 crisis 2. To actively promote that we are seeking donations 	Outstanding
6.4.20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To approve the proposal to suspend the Financial Regulations element that relates to the use of the credit card and to operate as follows – Members of the Management Team may use the Town Council Credit card under the authorisation of the Chief Officer 2. To approve an increase in the Town Council credit card limit to £3,000 from £1,000 	Approved Approved
6.4.20	<p>To support Congleton Food Hub with an float of £200 and subsequent top-ups, the method of authorisation either</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two members of Finance & Policy 2. Delegated to the Chief Officer or either the RFO or Deputy Chief Officer in his absence 	Approved Review @£1000 Yes

3 APRIL 2020

L01-20 | THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE AND CRIME PANELS (CORONAVIRUS) (FLEXIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY AND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETINGS) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2020

Introduction

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Regulations") come in to force on 4 April. Broadly speaking, the 2020 Regulations enable local councils to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May next year. They also remove the requirement to hold an annual meeting. The 2020 Regulations apply to local council meetings, committee and sub-committee meetings in England. Separate legislation is anticipated for Wales.

This briefing will summarise the detail of the 2020 Regulations and what they mean for local councils. The briefing should also be read in conjunction with the NALC guidance on remote meetings, which considers more practical issues around the holding of electronic meetings. The term "local council" will be used in this briefing to refer to parish councils, town councils and councils using alternative styles.

Background to the 2020 Regulations

The COVID-19/ Coronavirus pandemic and the unprecedented in peacetime Government measures in response to the crisis (e.g. prohibitions on gatherings, social distancing, self-isolation and shielding of those deemed to be the most vulnerable) have meant that the requirement for local authorities to hold public meetings in person with all members present in one place cannot be met. The statutory requirements for meetings are mainly contained in the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") and the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 ("the 1960 Act").

In recognition of the problem of holding and attending meetings, and further to the lobbying of NALC and others, the Government included s.78 in the Coronavirus Act 2020. This section gave the Secretary of State the power to make Regulations to make provisions for the holding of meetings. The 2020 Regulations set out those provisions.

What are the main provisions for local councils?

The relevant Regulations for local authorities are as follows:

Regulation 2 – the 2020 Regulations apply to local authority meetings that are required to be held, or held, before 7 May 2021. The date could be brought forward if Government rules are relaxed.

Regulation 3 – parish councils in England are included within the definition of “local authority” in the 2020 Regulations. Parish meetings are not included within the definition and, as such, there is nothing permitting them to meet remotely. In NALC’s view, the current Government guidance means that parish meetings should not take place in person, including the annual meeting of the electors.

Regulation 4 – this provides that where an appointment would otherwise be made or is required to be made at an annual meeting of a local authority, the appointment continues until the next annual meeting of the authority or until such time as that authority may determine (Regulation 4 (2)). This would apply to the election of the chairman, the first business at the annual council meeting. Therefore the current chairman will remain in place until an annual meeting is held (possibly next year) unless the council decide to elect a replacement earlier.

Regulation 5 – this permits the holding of remote meetings. The effect of the Regulation is that persons attending a local council meeting do not need to be in the same place. “Place” means more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers (Regulation 5 (1)). To attend a meeting remotely a member in remote attendance must meet specified conditions (see below).

Regulation 5 (6) also enables local councils to make standing orders to specify (i) how voting will be carried out, (ii) how members and the public can access documents and (iii) how remote access of the press and public by electronic means will take place. Councils should make these decisions based on their own needs and capacity. Local factors such as broadband strength may also determine what methods they use. See also the NALC guidance on remote meetings.

Regulation 6 – confirms that being present at a local council meeting includes being present through remote attendance. The Regulation also disapplies paragraph 7 of Schedule 12 to the 1972 Act. This means there is no requirement for a parish council to hold its annual meeting although a council may do so if they so choose. However paragraph 8 of Schedule 12 has not been disapplied. Paragraph 8 requires a local council to hold in a year not less than three meetings

in addition to the annual meeting. We believe this should also have been disapplied. The equivalent paragraphs have been disapplied for principal authorities (paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12).

Regulation 13 – s.1 (4) (a) of the 1960 Act has been amended so that public notice of the time and place of the meeting is deemed to be given if published on the relevant principal authority's website. In NALC's view the notice could be placed on the local council's website or in a prominent physical place to meet the advertising requirements contained in Schedule 12 of the 1972 Act. Councils should take account of social distancing requirements before deciding to put notices in physical spaces NALC's view is that a council's decision making is unlikely to be challenged if it only places the notice on its own website.

Regulation 17 – confirms that a local council complies with Regulation 8 of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 (decisions and background papers to be made available to the public) by making the written record and any background papers available for inspection by publishing them on their website; or by such other means that the council considers appropriate.

What are the specified conditions to enable local councils to meet remotely?

Regulation 5(2) of the 2020 Regulations provides that a member in remote attendance attends the meeting at any time if the member is able at that time:

- a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other members in attendance,
- b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting, and
- c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

All of the above conditions must be satisfied.

These conditions allow members to join via a video link system or by telephone so long as every member can be heard by every other member and the public.

All members, clerk and other staff, and any members of the public will be in attendance for the purposes of the 2020 Regulations if they are in remote attendance. The provisions in Regulation 5 will apply notwithstanding any standing orders or rules to the contrary.

Existing provisions that have not been specifically disapplied still apply, including the notice requirements in Schedule 12 of the 1972 Act.

Summary

- The 2020 Regulations permit the holding of remote meetings, with conditions.
- Local councils can decide the methods they will use to facilitate the holding of remote meetings.
- There is no requirement to hold an annual meeting.

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A microscopic image showing several coronavirus particles. One large, spherical particle with a distinct, spiky surface is in the upper left. Another similar particle is partially visible in the lower left. A third, elongated and more detailed particle is on the right side, showing the characteristic crown-like spikes. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

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FOREWORD

On 4 April 2020, the government brought The Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 into force to allow local authorities to conduct meetings remotely. NALC has produced a legal briefing with our interpretations of the regulations which can be accessed in the member's area of our website. This guide has been produced by NALC to support local (parish and town) councils to be able to conduct their meetings in a new way.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

This is very likely to be the first time your council has tried holding meetings remotely, and so planning and preparation will be key. Ideally, your aim should be for councillors and staff to be entering your first remote council meeting with confidence and clarity about how the meeting will run. The clerk should make arrangements in advance or the council may wish to consider setting up a small working group. Below you find some issues to consider.

Which platform to use

The remote meeting platforms section of this guide (see page five) provides a list of platforms that are available and may be good options for council meetings. This list is not exhaustive and it's worth spending a bit of time considering different options. One factor that may affect your choice is the technology available to councillors and staff (e.g. if not everyone has a computer/laptop then you will want to pick a platform that allows individuals to join by telephone).

What investment might be needed?

It is possible to hold remote meetings at no cost to the council. Most platforms offer some free option for holding meetings. However, for a small investment you may be able to access additional functions that the council may feel are good value. For example, most platforms impose a time limit on their free accounts that may be difficult for council meetings to adhere to.

On top of the potential cost of the meeting platform itself, you may wish to consider investment in hardware. For example, if some councillors do not have access to a laptop the council may consider purchasing this equipment. You should also consider individuals with specific needs (e.g. if someone has a hearing impairment then certain headphones may help them hear the meetings better). As part of your preparations you should contact councillors and staff to find out what technology they do have access to and any concerns or needs that they have.

Any spending decisions will have to be made by the council bearing in mind your budget and ability to incur such costs. It is also worth remembering that this is only a temporary situation and at some point we will return to holding face-to-face meetings again. Large investments would not be advisable if they won't have long term benefits.

Holding a practice meeting

Practice makes perfect – and this is particularly true when trying something new. If possible it is worth holding a practice meeting with all councillors and staff so that you can work out any technical issues and to see if your approach to voting and discussions does work for everyone. You may then need to go back to amend your proposed approach and even try a second practice before the ‘real’ council meeting.

Holding practice meetings might feel like an extra demand on everyone’s time, but it will be much easier to work out bugs and issues in advance than to be struggling with them during the council meeting itself. How frustrating would it be to discover that you are not able to hold the council meeting due to technical difficulties you could have resolved in advance?

Once these practical issues have been resolved attention will then need to turn to how you will conduct the meeting itself. This is covered in the following sections. Once those issues have been considered you will then need to decide if any written guidance for the council would be useful. This might be an addendum to your standing orders explaining how these will be interpreted, or a less formal document that lays out how the meeting will run.

COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS AND VOTING

In general you should try and keep to your usual approach to meetings and stick to your standing orders as much as you can. The council should remember this is a usual council meeting. You should consider in advance how you will manage discussions and voting to allow the meeting to run as smoothly as possible.

Council discussions

The chairman of the council should still chair the meeting. They should take the opportunity of any practice meetings to ensure they are confident following the agenda, managing input from councillors and staff, and keeping the meeting to time. Some suggestions to aid this are:

- Asking everyone to mute themselves when not speaking - this helps keep background noise to a minimum which will improve everyone’s ability to hear the discussions.
- If everyone is able to join by video then they could raise their hands when they wish to speak.
- If some people cannot join by video then raising hands will not be an option. It also will make it harder to keep track of who is speaking. In this scenario, the chairman could ask people to state clearly when they would like to speak. The risk with this is that people may wish to speak at the same time and so speak over one another, but in a small group this may be manageable. Another option might be for the chair to read from a list of councillors names and ask them in turn if there is anything they wish to say or ask. This may take more time but allows for a more controlled approach.

- The chairman may ask everyone to state their name before they start speaking so that it is always clear who is speaking.
- How will you keep track of who is 'present'. It may be the case that some individuals have technical issues that mean that they 'leave' the meeting, for example their internet connection means that they are cut off. Some platforms are very clear on who is present, some are less clear. If you are not sure you would be aware of anyone accidentally dropping out of the meeting you might wish to do a quick 'roll call' before each item to ensure you are able to accurately minute who was present.

Voting

There is no 'right way' to conduct voting in a remote meeting. You will have to find an approach that works best for the council. Some things to consider are:

- Will everyone be joining by video? If so then you could raise hands to vote as in a physical meeting.
- If you will not be able to see everyone then of course raising hands will not work. In this case you might do a roll call of councillors names and ask them to state their vote. Some platforms may allow other methods of voting eg stating a vote in a 'chat' function. Whatever method you choose, you should consider this in advance of the meeting and ideally practice it in advance too.
- You might also consider asking the chairman or clerk to read back the votes of the council so that everyone is sure their vote has been recorded correctly.
- Make sure every vote, whether visually or by telephone, is clear and unambiguous.

Behaviours and conduct

It is worth remembering that the required standards of behaviour and discussion are the same whether in remote or face-to-face meetings. These are difficult times and people may be worried about their health or family members, they may be frustrated being isolated at home, and there may be challenges with using new technology particularly if there are technical difficulties. Everyone in the meeting will need to be respectful and compassionate towards one another, emotions may be higher than usual but that only makes it more important that everyone approaches the meeting with respect and in the spirit of the council's code of conduct.

Declaring Interests

The council will need to consider how they will manage councillors 'leaving' a meeting if they have an interest and do not wish to be part of the meeting, particularly if they consider there will be negative public perception if they remain. It may be that the councillor with an interest, leave the meeting but agree, with the chairman a time to return to the meeting. Should the council need further time on a matter, another agreed time frame can be given.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Council meetings must still be advertised and the public have a right to observe. If you would normally allow public questions or input in your meeting then it is worth trying to keep this approach with remote meetings too.

Different platforms have different options for how this can be achieved. Some (e.g. Zoom) allow the audience to speak whenever they wish, whereas others (e.g. GoToMeeting), give the council more control over who can speak when. It's worth keeping in mind that there is the same risk of disruption to a normal council meeting as there is for a remote meeting. So it may not be necessary to be able to control the public's ability to speak, it is likely they will follow the rules of the meeting as they usually do. The chair or clerk should also take a note who wishes to speak, from the public, to ensure that no one is missed out. This is key in rural areas with poorer broadband capacities, which can cause people to 'leave' meetings accidentally due to signal strengths.

If there are parts of the agenda that are confidential then you will need to ask the public observers to leave as you normally would. If you fear there is a risk of people accidentally joining the confidential item you might consider setting up a different meeting ID/log in that is not shared with the public for that item. Some platforms also allow meetings to be password protected.

If you do have members of the public attending then take some time at the beginning of the meeting to explain to them how the meeting will run and how and when they can speak. This will help manage their expectations.

AFTER THE MEETING

Minute taking should be done as usual with the clerk seeking clarity at any point, should it be needed. The minutes should be agreed at the next meeting and can always be retrospectively signed at the next face-to-face meeting.

Once you have held your first remote council meeting it is worth taking a little time to reflect on how it went and what you might wish to change or improve for next time.

REMOTE MEETING PLATFORMS

In this section you will find a range of meeting platforms with their advantages and disadvantages along with any pricing information to help your council make a decision on the best platform to use.

Google Hangouts

<https://hangouts.google.com>

This is a communication platform that can be used for messaging, video conferencing and calls. The Classic Google Hangouts is free. Google Hangouts

Meet is Google's paid video conferencing software — find out more at https://gsuite.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/pricing.html

Advantages:

- It can be used on multiple devices including computers/laptops, Android and Apple devices.
- Screen sharing options are available.
- Participants can use the chat option whilst on the video call.

Disadvantages:

- For video conferencing there is a limit of up to 25 participants.
- Participants must have a Gmail account.

GoToMeeting

<https://www.gotomeeting.com/en-gb>

This is HD video conferencing software that can be used for meetings and collaboration. Find out more about pricing at <https://www.gotomeeting.com/en-gb/meeting/pricing-ma>

Advantages:

- Meetings can be scheduled in advance.
- Invitations can be integrated with Office 365 or Google Calendar plugins.
- Participants can join meetings through 'call me' option
- GoToMeeting can automatically call participants.
- Screen sharing options are available.
- Can host meetings with up to 250 participants.
- Meetings can be recorded and meeting transcripts can be shared.

Disadvantages:

- The platform requires fast internet connection.
- Older systems may struggle to operate GoToMeeting.
- There are limitations with the free version — meetings can last 40 minutes and include three participants.

Microsoft Teams

<https://products.office.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

This is a collaboration and conversational platform as part of Office 365. Find out more about pricing at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/business/compare-more-office-365-for-business-plans>

Advantages:

- Within meetings you can share screens and record your meeting.
- Participants can join meetings, without joining Teams by clicking on the email link.
- Previous meeting notes and recordings can be accessed.

- The platform allows for 250 participants.

Disadvantages:

- The maximum PowerPoint size is 2GB.
- There are limited features on the Microsoft Teams free platform compared to the paid Microsoft Teams. More information is available on Microsoft Support.

Skype

<https://www.skype.com/en>

This is an online communications tool that can be used with PC/laptop, mobile phone, tablet or web. Skype has HD voice and video calling which helps to host group meetings. Skype can also be used for instant messaging. Skype is free however calls to mobile or landline incurs a charge.

Advantages:

- Screen share is available, which can be used for PowerPoints, videos, pictures and on screen calls.
- You can save calls and record your screen.
- Conversations can be protected with end to end encryption.
- Skype can be used to reach those without skype using telephone calling services.

Disadvantages:

- There is a limit of 49 people joining group calls
- Skype provides limited customer support.

Slack

<https://slack.com/intl/en-gb>

This is a collaboration hub which provides an alternative to email communication. It can be used for conversations as well as voice or video calls. Find out more about pricing at <https://slack.com/intl/en-gb/pricing>

Advantages:

- Screen sharing options are available.
- Slack operates using channels which helps bring everything together in one place, such as documents and conversations.
- Joining and starting calls is fairly straightforward.
- Slack is known to be a secure platform for calls.

Disadvantages:

- Slack has limitations with how many people can join a call. This is up to 15 people using the paid standard package.
- There is a limitation to how many features are available on the free version.

Zoom

<https://zoom.us>

This is a video conferencing platform. This can be used for meetings, collaborations and participants can also use the chat option. It also supports audio conferencing, allowing people to join by telephone as well. Find out more about pricing at <https://zoom.us/pricing>

Advantages:

- Participants can share screens with each other (e.g. share a PowerPoint presentation).
- Meetings can be made securely. This includes having passwords and meeting IDs for participants to join meetings.
- Meeting invitations can be added to Outlook Calendar, Google Calendar or Yahoo Calendar.
- You can save the chat conversations.
- Meetings can also be recorded for future reference.

Disadvantages:

- The level of support you can receive from Zoom is dependent on the Zoom package being used.
- The free Zoom package limits group meetings to 40 minutes.