

Date: 07 May 2020

Title: Report Item 7– Business in Progress

By: K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

Purpose: To provide an update on progress since the informal April meeting

Recommendations: To note the progress report

The office is settling to a new normal, following the publication of new regulations under the Coronavirus Act 2020 allowing parish councils to continue working by holding virtual meetings. These emergency powers came into effect on 4th April 2020 and may last until 7th May 2021, subject to review. They modify the normal requirement that parish councils must hold all their meetings in person and in public, but they also preserve transparency during the emergency period by ensuring there is public access to virtual meetings, either online or by phone [see *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 effects on the statutory items of business which come around at this time of year are as follows:

- **Annual Governance and Accountability Return** – the annual audit is normally governed by a statutory timetable which has become impossible to meet. It has been extended by the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 30th April 2020. The AGAR return must now be approved and published on a freely accessible website, along with a notice advertising public rights, no later than Monday 31 August 2020. The period during which public rights of inspection may be exercised is now a period of 30 days commencing no later than Tuesday 1 September 2020. The audit should be concluded by the External Auditor by the end of November. The documentation from the External Auditor which initiates the whole process arrived recently and the first submission of information to the Internal Auditor is under way.
- **Annual village meeting** – there is no obligation to hold such a meeting this year
- **Annual parish council meeting** – there is no obligation to hold such a meeting this year either. Normally it is a time when appointments and other internal arrangements are reviewed. Regulation 4(2) allows for the appointment of the current Chair of the Council to continue until the next annual meeting in May 2021, though the council may elect a Chair at an earlier date if they so wish. The same applies to the office of Vice Chair. Both Cllr Keller and Cllr Seeley are willing to continue in office.
- **Annual parish council grant scheme** – at the informal council meeting held on 2nd April it was agreed that the annual grant scheme would still run but that applications would be invited later in the year when clubs and societies were able to meet again.

In other news:

- Zoom account – a Pro account can only be held by an individual, not by an organisation. The next level is a Business account which is considerably more expensive. Since a Pro account does all that is required, and there are already at least three councillors who have one and can host meetings, no further action is to be taken.
- Cyber-crime insurance policy – the sourcing of a replacement policy is in hand
- County liaison meeting – an agenda for a remote meeting is in preparation
- Use of precept for road maintenance – there has been no further progress.