

## Emergency Arrangements for continuation of essential work of the Parish Council during the period of Coronavirus

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Due to the impact of COVID19 and in the absence of the Chair; the Vice Chair, Finance Lead and the Parish Clerk, acting together, proposed arrangements to enable the essential business of Buckden Parish Council to be carried out, with due regard for the health and safety of our residents, service users, Councillors and employees.

Given the advice from the government on social distancing, all Councillors were sent the proposals and they emailed to state whether they agreed to these arrangements. Formal ratification will be sought at the first public Council meeting we are able to hold.

### **SAFETY STATEMENT – MEETINGS**

Buckden Parish Council recognises and agrees that no business, meeting, service provision or service delivery of the Authority (Council) is of any importance above that of public and personal safety. Consequentially, and after due consideration by Councillors

**AGREED:** All scheduled public meetings will be cancelled for an **initial period until 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020**. This period may be extended by a majority vote of Councillors.

Notices will be put on the Parish Council Boards announcing the cessation of meetings and directing residents to the Parish Council website for more information on Council business.

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS / FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

**AGREED:** That Buckden Parish Council gives delegated authority to the Clerk as our Responsible Financial Officer (in consultation with any two of the Chairman/Vice Chairman/Finance lead) to suspend any relevant Standing Order or Financial Regulation as they judge to be necessary to ensure the smooth running and operation (wherever possible) of the Parish Council until public meetings of the Council start again or a further majority vote of Councillors. The Clerk will compile and maintain a log of such suspensions and reasons; the log will be presented to a future meeting of the Parish Council for scrutiny.

### **ADDITIONAL DELEGATED AUTHORITY – STAFF MEMBERS**

**AGREED:** Buckden Parish Council gives additional **delegated authority** for a period of **no longer than 2 months, or such longer period as Councillors authorise by majority vote** (notwithstanding relevant Government legislation or medical/relevant body advice or best/safe practice) to the Clerk to manage the business of the Council, in consultation with any two of the Chairman/Vice Chairman/Finance lead to:

- undertake day to day duties (wherever possible and within legal constraints and with the best intentions of public safety and to promote infection control) in order to minimise disruption to service provision and ensure business continuity;
- undertake any additional duties necessary (wherever possible within legal constraints and with the best intentions of public safety and to promote infection control) in order to minimise disruption to service provision and ensure business continuity;
- undertake decisive actions (within legal constraints and with the best intentions of public safety and to promote infection control) in respect of cancelling any meetings of the Parish Council, its committees or working groups.

### **ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING / ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

As meetings are to be cancelled this will affect:

**The Annual Meeting of Buckden Parish Council** (scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020), where Committees, Advisory groups and the role of Chair and Vice Chair are proposed. Therefore, the roles Chair, Vice Chair and the existing committee and advisory group structures (including the chairmanship of such) will remain the same until a suitable and safe public meeting is called and held.

**The Annual Parish Meeting**, scheduled for 22<sup>th</sup> April which will not take place. The Parish Council will hold such meeting at a future date giving appropriate notice.

It is noted that whilst the above decisions are contrary to existing legislation (as of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020) the Parish Council has made these decisions in order to place public safety at the forefront.

### **ORDERS FOR PAYMENT**

**AGREED:** That the Clerk, along with those Councillors with delegated responsibility for the authorising and signing of payments, puts measures in place with robust transparency processes to ensure effective business continuation and to minimise impact on local service delivery and local business with ratification by the Council to be made at the earliest and safest opportunity. Further details of these processes will be circulated to all Councillors and the processes will remain under review, as the current unprecedented situation develops.

### **PLANNING MATTERS**

**AGREED:** That the Council authorises the Planning Committees to deal with planning applications via email and gives delegated power to the Clerk to collate responses and submit to HDC (on a majority basis).

### **BUDGETARY CONTROL AND AUTHORITY TO SPEND**

**AGREED:** In respect of any emergency or Health & Safety matter to authorise an increase in the spending limit to the Clerk in consultation with any two of the Chairman / Vice Chairman and Finance lead of the respective substantive committees and Advisory Groups (i.e. Admin, Planning, Personnel) from any item below £500 to any amount below £ 5,000.

**AGREED** in the event of the out-sourced payroll function ceasing, the Clerk will arrange payment of both estimated staff payments and HMRC, though bank transfer, in line with the normal timescales. All such payments will be reviewed, and if necessary adjusted, at the earliest opportunity.

**AGREED** Non-confidential Payments For Sanction (PFS) will be circulated to all Councillors and the confidential PFS will be circulated to nominated Councillors for approval in line with the process agreed by the full Council in March 2020.

### **AUDIT**

**AGREED:** The Clerk will prepare for the annual, statutory Audit and AGAR submission. She will seek advice from the Internal Auditor on the matter of the statutory deadlines for submission and public scrutiny of the accounts and will act as appropriate on any National Guidance on these matters which is issued to Councils.

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### **CONTRACT AWARDS**

**AGREED:** That the awarding of essential new contracts be delegated to the Finance Advisory group (acting through email) using best value principles (noting best value does not mean the cheapest) with the decision to be ratified by the Council at a future date.

### **STAFFING MATTERS – ANNUAL APPRAISALS**

**AGREED:** That annual staffing reviews be delayed and any monetary awards be backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 (once and if approved).

### **POLICY UPDATES**

**AGREED:** That delegation is afforded to the Clerk to update policy documentation where revision dates are the only necessary updates, such updates to be ratified by the Council at a future meeting. Where any legislative or operational changes in policies are judged to be necessary, the Clerk will update relevant documentation and implement any necessary changes.

### **BURIALS**

**AGREED:** The Clerk will continue to administer Burial arrangements in the Buckden Cemetery using the on-line Epitaph system. She will liaise with local funeral directors to co-ordinate our response to requests for burials, taking full account of National Guidance current at the time the request is made.

### **WORK OF PARISH CLERK**

**AGREED:** That the Parish Clerk works her hours from home until the reopening of the Village Hall.

**AGREED:** In the event that the Parish Clerk is unable to carry out her duties, the situation will be reviewed, and in full consultation with the Council appropriate measures put in place to ensure essential activities continue.

### **WORK OF THE HANDYMEN**

**AGREED:** The Council will review the available advice for local council employers. In line with that and any subsequent amendments, we will provide appropriate email advice to the Handymen about their work and the priorities for the village, in particular in relation to health and safety e.g. monitoring and emptying of Parish Council-managed bins.



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