

GREAT NESS and LITTLE NESS PARISH COUNCIL

Dear Members of the Parish Council

Notice is hereby given that an Extraordinary Council Meeting of the above named Parish Council will be held on Tuesday 7th July 2020 at 7.30pm and Members are hereby summoned to attend for the purpose of transacting the following business. The meeting will be held remotely using Zoom and the link to the access the meeting will be sent separately.

R Turner

Clerk to the Council, 2nd July 2020

AGENDA

- 32/2021 **PRESENT & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 33/2021 **DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS**
Declaration of any disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter to be discussed at the meeting and which is not included in the register of interests. (Members are reminded that they are required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest whether or not the interest in the register of members' interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer).
- 34/2021 **DISPENSATION REQUESTS**
- 35/2021 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**
A period of 15 minutes is set aside to allow the public the opportunity to speak on an agenda item.
- 36/2021 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS – To consider**
a) 20/01879/FUL - Erection of single storey and part first floor rear extension and portico to front elevation; internal and elevational alterations
Re-consultation
- 37/2021 **PLAY AREA RE-OPENING – NESSCLIFFE AND WILCOTT**
a) *Government guidelines on re-opening play areas (see Appendix A & B)*
b) *Risk Assessments and to decide whether to re-open*
c) *Maintenance required*
d) *Signage required (please refer to signs previously sent)*
- 38/2021 **COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT - GENERAL**
- 39/2021 **FINANCIAL MATTERS - ROUTINE**
a) *To approve payments including payments made between meetings*
b) *To note income received*

Appendix A: Government guidance on re-opening play areas:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms>

Appendix B: Letter from Shrewsbury Town Council to Sector Body for Play highlighting difficulties with complying with the guidance

Dear Mark

As the Chairman of the Sector Body for Play I wish to detail Shrewsbury Town Council's difficulties in adhering to the Guidelines Issued last Friday.

By way of background Shrewsbury Town Council is the principle deliverer of play in Shrewsbury. We have over 60 different playgrounds over a large spectrum of play including.

- Neighbourhood equipped areas for play
- Local equipped areas for play
- Local areas for play
- Splash Park
- Basketball courts
- Multi-Use Games Areas
- BMX Tracks
- Skateboard Parks

I have 3 Neighbourhood Wardens whose sole responsibility is to manage these sites, undertaking the weekly inspections, carrying out weekly cleansing, grass cutting and litter picking and carrying out any repairs identified from the annual ROSPA inspection. Our Splash park alone requires 3 visits a day to test water quality.

Once the Prime Minister announced that Play Areas would reopen on the 4th July we were glad to see that you had put in place very practical measures to manage the opening of play areas and our signage design was on the basis of your recommendations.

You can therefore imagine our horror when we read the guidelines and considered the implications and I list below the areas of concern

- **Play Area Capacity** – the guidelines call for determination of play area capacity. We are fortunate that we have a GIS mapping system so this has simplified the project, having said that I have had a member of staff solely on this task today. In determining capacity there is no reference to the square metre-age to be used to determine capacity. We have spoken to both sector specialists and our insurers to determine capacity and I have not been able to determine a definitive position. I have therefore worked out what the area of a 2 metre radius circle around a child would be (12 sqm); this seems compatible with the Institute of Place Management. I think it is also pertinent to use 2m rule given children couldn't use mitigation like face masks.
- **Ensuring Social Distancing** – we believe this is completely impractical to manage. Even if we were able to resource a member of staff to monitor each play area, that individual would not be able to intervene to ensure distancing on safeguarding grounds.
- **Online Booking System** – we believe this is totally impossible to develop a system within a week to do this and in any event if it could be done it would not be done.
- **Setting Time Limits** – the guidelines ask that time limits are set. How is this possible to monitor and enforce?
- **Removal of equipment** – the guidelines call for equipment to be removed to ensure social distancing. This is not only an extremely time costly thing to do particularly given all of the other measures to put in place, it also fails to recognise that parents often come with more than one child and they are quite adept in pushing both their children on swings next to each other.

- **Cleaning** – the guidelines calls for cleaning of high traffic touch points at frequent intervals. We cannot see what the definition of frequent is, nor the effectiveness of cleaning. We can only guarantee that 1 single user is safe from cleaning a play area (the first person to use the site after we have cleaned it)
- **Hand sanitisers** – the guidelines suggest we install hand sanitisers at every facility. 60 x £149 – I'll leave you to do the maths
- **Place extra bins and increase the bin emptying frequency** – we are currently drowning under litter that is left in our parks and open spaces due to Government allowing gatherings in the open yet keeping bars, restaurants and cafes closed. Despite these establishments being required to uphold the licensing objectives (of which litter is one) we are collective their rubbish. We are currently collecting 20 tonnes of rubbish a week from our park alone (some 10 x the normal amount)

We have calculated to implement this will cost us:

120 permanent signs @£16.75	£2010
600 floor stickers @ £2	£1200
60 Hand Sanitiser Stations @£149	£8940
Installation & Removal @2hrs per play area	£3600
2 barriers per play area @ £10 per barrier	£1200
TOTAL	£16950

On top of this there would be increased weekly materials like hand sanitiser, additional cleaning materials and PPE.

On the whole it is clear the author of the document is quite naive in his/her knowledge of how a play area is used and managed. The recommendations are extremely costly to put in place.

We would like to see:

- The need for density calculations and associated signage to be removed
- No play equipment to be removed but instead reference on signage that equipment should only be used by a family bubble
- Responsibility for good hygiene of the child rest firmly with the parent/carer
- Only Signage on general rules of use of a park/play area be required. We have designed our own and I have attached as an idea
- Cleansing regimes be limited to the weekly routine regimes

For us this comes at a time when we are facing a £250k deficit in our revenue budget. Government is unwilling to actively engage with the Local Council Sector to help alleviate the issue and has batted us to what they refer to our “parent councils” (County, District & Unitary Councils) who they say they have given funds to mitigate the financial distress of Parish Councils, but are all not willing to pass on funds as their losses are greater than the income received. We have not seen a penny of the High Street Recover Fund but have already had to pay in £30k for the Shrewsbury Town Centre Recovery Plan and a further £20k to support community groups.

Whilst my scenario in Shrewsbury is large as we have so many play areas, the pain is relative and felt across the whole of the sector at a time when our sectors officers and elected members are feeling the strain of supporting our communities at grass roots level. Guidelines like these which are so remote from that grassroots community management are totally impractical, are divisive in that it is the Parish Council and not government that is seen to be the “Fun Police” and counter-intuitive.

I have copied the Large Councils Forum and our County Forum here in Shropshire into this email as I'm sure many will respond with similar issues to mine.

Anything you can so to make civil servants see sense would be most grateful.