

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held at the Village Hall on Tuesday, 7th January at 7.30pm.

Present were: Mrs N.A. Brooks (Chair), M. Walker (Vice-Chair), M. Wilson and G. Soame. The clerk, Ken Brooks, C. Mathew (County Councillor) and Dan Levy (District Councillor) were in attendance. Apologies were received from Mrs E. Mawle and Carl Rylett (WODC).

1. The Chair read a statement on Parish Council reforms and an intended clarification of Declarable Interests. The text of that statement is reproduced as 'Appendix 1' below.
2. Declarations of Interest were made by M. Walker in respect of land in the Parish; by the Chair as a client of the applicant at April Cottage; and by G. Soame as a consultant to the pub.
3. The Chair observed that in accordance with our new agreed policy the draft Minutes of the last meeting had been posted on the website after being approved by the PC. She had received an email from K. Lazarov with comments on the Minutes which she duly read aloud. The Chair said that the PC had in fact already individually approved the Minutes before posting and M. Wilson observed that it was for the PC itself to approve its own Minutes. The Chair proposed that a copy of the email be placed with the Minutes which the PC agreed provided as M. Wilson made clear that the email wasn't an approved Minute. The Chair then signed the Minutes and the Clerk was authorised to publish as being a true record of proceedings. The text of K. Lazarov's email is reproduced as 'Appendix 2' below.
4. Various parishioners had asked to speak though on the basis that their concerns had been addressed or would be addressed later only J. Alexander spoke regarding the latest telephone scam. He agreed to email T. Lawson for the website and C. Mathew who said he would then contact Trading Standards.
5. D. Levy and C. Mathew spoke on developments on the Solar Farm in particular regarding a forthcoming new layout application and D. Levy said that the Garden Village was progressing faster than expected. However, there was nothing we need or could do
6. There were no matters arising from the previous Minutes not thought to be covered elsewhere in the Agenda.
7. **Constitutional**
 - a. VOTE: The PC voted unanimously to co-opt Lysette Nicholls as a new Parish Councillor to replace Nick Kelaher.
 - b. The Chair said again that the PC Standing Orders (aka Model Rules) and the WODC Code of Conduct were already on the website to which she intended to add a paper on Declarable Interests which was read out. **VOTE:** The paper was adopted unanimously.
 - c. Having already attended a meeting as our Traffic Officer, now that she is on the PC, Lysette Nicholls was confirmed pro-tem as our representative on the Eynsham Community Resilience Forum (aka Neighbourhood Watch) though with an invitation for other PC members to get involved if they wished.
8. **Financial Report**
 - a. The Financial Report and Forecast Accounts (already circulated to PC) were agreed.
 - b. VOTE: PC agreed (with M. Walker opposing as he wished for no increase to the Precept) to raise the Precept by 3%.
 - c. Payments already made were noted as £960 - village green grass cutting; £300 - football pitch grass cutting; £210 - bus shelter panels and £125 - Newsletter. The Clerk confirmed all these payments. The Clerk was asked to reply to VLU turning down their request for a grant. M. Wilson observed that there was nothing in our budget for this or any other grant and likewise nothing in the budget for the Playground grass cutting which he did presently and perhaps there should be.

Facilities

- a. Village Hall.
- b. Village Green.
- c. Playground. The Clerk reported that nothing had come in as yet from Cottsway.
- d. Football Pitch. likewise M. Wilson said nothing had come in from Savills or the Estate's lawyers.
- e. Telephone Box. M. Walker said the pub had been in touch regarding an old red box he had. Concern was expressed that the Box shouldn't be lit at night.
- f. Bus Shelter. G. Soame said he was looking for volunteers to help in the Spring.

9. Planning matters

Any relevant Planning applications for consideration and comment (dates in brackets are the PC not necessarily the public consultation deadline dates).

a. Applications

- Aurora Solar Farm

This had already been touched on and the Chair now gave a brief report on her on going contact with WODC, EPC, Low Carbon and Green T.

- Anaerobic Digester

C. Mathew said that we should shortly hear regarding the next stage consultation.

Concern was expressed over traffic movements and access. This is not dead.

- Shuttles Cottage

Riding Arena (26-12-19). The Chair reported on the response the PC had given regarding light and drainage in particular.

- Mason Arms

New accommodation and retrospective wall demolition (11-12-19). G. Soame left the room having declared an interest. The PC decided to approve subject to the Clerk ascertaining the extent of the listing going forward.

- Bantam Lodge

Condition 10 Variation (31-12-19 PC date; 13-1-20 Public date). The Chair reported that WODC was only prepared to act on one complaint namely the hedge and hence this Variation application which the PC had considered individually when everyone thought the consultation deadline was 31 December and had been minded to follow WODC. The Chair said that Mrs Mawle had given assurances that the hedge would be planted on the house side once planning had been granted and as soon as the contractors were able. The neighbour, M. Barrett had asked to speak and now spoke. He wanted the hedge on the house side but he had a much more fundamental issue namely that he didn't believe the boundary was correctly shown and he wanted the PC to investigate and object to WODC. C. Mathew offered to talk to Highways Maps Dept. to ascertain their views though he thought that Highways would take no action even if there had been a trespass. T Lawson suggested the PC ask WODC to delay a decision until March while the boundary issue was investigated. The Chair proposed that the PC relay a response to give C. Mathew some time but if he didn't have an answer then the PC should respond saying it was content if the hedge was planted house-side but that a parishioner had raised serious concerns about the boundary line. The Chair also doubted WODC would take much notice as the application stated that the works all lay within the title and it wasn't the business of WODC to check. Of course anyone could write in to WODC - it wasn't just a matter for the PC. Mr. Barrett made much of Mrs Mawle being on the PC (though she was absent now) and questioned whether one could trust her word. Mrs Perkins said she didn't believe anyone wouldn't go right up to their boundary so she was sceptical about the story that Mrs Mawle had voluntarily recessed her fence line. The Chair said the PC could only pass on the concerns of Mr. Barrett and Mrs Perkins. It wasn't in a position to make a judgement on boundary lines itself. The Clerk was asked to send the site plan to C. Mathew asap.

- April Cottage

Extension, South Leigh Road, High Cogges (9-1-20). The Chair and the Clerk and M. Walker as a neighbour all left the meeting. Other than commenting on the drainage issue, no objections were raised by the PC.

- The Old Post Office

The Chair reported that she had heard no more regarding the Old Post Office.

b. Conservation Area

Gary Nicholls has replaced Dick Pears as the lead and confirmed that he was still investigating and would report in due course

c. Neighbourhood Plan

The Clerk observed that the issue of exterior lighting at Shuttles Cottage was an interesting test of the efficacy of the Neighbourhood Plan albeit D. Pears said he had met the owners and had been reassured that they did not intend permanent exterior lighting.

d. Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair said that Eynsham NP was going to referendum on 30th January, 2020

e. East Witney Consultation

The Chair reported on the East Witney Consultation. M. Wilson and G. Soame thought the Parish Council should write on the issues of cycle paths and nature networks and G. Soame thought we should press for more 1 and 2 bedroom homes in the housing mix. M. Barrett thought traffic down Newlands was already dreadful and that this development would only aggravate the problems. M. Walker left the meeting while the Parish Council discussed the Shores Green junction and concerns were expressed about volume of traffic and the anaerobic digester proposal.

10. Footpaths

The Chair said that she had received a report from the Cherrys and would action.

11. Roads and Traffic

- Flooding

The Chair said that she was in touch with the National Trust over Wayside Cottage and the flooding by Shuttles. G. Soame said Martin Collett and he had already done some remedial work. C. Mathew offered to chase up OCC.

- Pothole repairs and damaged verges

M. Walker reported on the latest (inadequate) work down in High Cogges. All agreed that "Fix My Street" was the only way.

- Tree planting report

The Clerk had distributed the report and M. Spurrier made a brief commentary. The PC was supportive. C. Mathew apologised for not sending the grant papers through to the Clerk and said that realistically we were now looking at the new financial year (After the meeting, offers of help were made from village children).

- Litter collection

The Chair advised a revised date of 26th January at 10:30 Margery Cross.

- Winter salt spreader

M. Walker said he had got nowhere so please take off the Agenda.

- Speeding

12. The date for next meeting was fixed as 7th January, 2020. The Chair noted that at that meeting the PC would need to fix dates for the whole of 2020 and a date for the AGM between 11th and 26th May, 2020.

Parish Events

The Chair reminded everyone of the Council elections in May and invited anyone that wanted to stand to do so. The Clerk advised that he was going on a WODC briefing course in late January on the issue of the elections which he confirmed would cover District and Parish.

AOB

- Travellers' Camp. The Chair reported on the travellers' camp at the cattle bridge - now gone.
- D. Pears said that he was in negotiation with Richard Law and the Village Hall Committee over the idea to erect a permanent Christmas Tree outside the Village Hall.

AGM & Meeting dates

The Parish Council AGM will be on 14th May 2020. Changing the day of the week for ordinary meetings has proved to be a nightmare so the next meetings will be on 18th February and 31st March. There will be an ordinary meeting after the AGM on 14th May and that will determine the meeting dates for the remainder of the year depending on Village Hall bookings and whether we need the big hall or not.

APPENDIX 1

Note from the Chairman of the Parish Council at a meeting on 7th January 2020

I would like to start this meeting with a short statement.

Over the past few parish council meetings there has been concerns expressed by some parishioners over some of the actions of the parish council.

This has caused me look more closely at how we operate and our procedures and openness as to how we serve the parish.

As parish councillors we sign up to both standing orders (or Model Rules) and the councillors' code of conduct as suggested by OALC and WODC (copies to hand and on the website). The other area of concern and misunderstanding is that of Declarable Interests - councillors are duty-bound to declare any item of which they have an interest at either the beginning of the meeting or as a matter is raised. But exactly what this declaration covers is less clear. I hope to remedy this today.

I don't believe that any councillor has broken any of the above rules / code of conduct but on review I do think we haven't kept up-to-date with our increasing duty to be fully transparent particularly in the area of record keeping. This hasn't been a purposeful action - what was acceptable years ago is no longer - and rightfully so. I am grateful for members of the public bringing this to my attention and I would like to apologise.

As I and the Clerk have reviewed matters, we have initiated the following changes:

- The minutes of PC meetings are fuller and more fit for purpose, they are agreed by parish councillors by e mail shortly after the meeting and immediately posted on the website. Each item has the same numbering system and heading as the agenda had for ease of reference.
- The minutes now record any decisions (particularly on planning consultations) that have had to be made outside the usual meeting regime due to time pressure.
- It has become apparent that although WODC give us a deadline to reply for any consultative matters, this deadline often has more flexibility that we had realised. I am undertaking that in future we will ask for WODC deadlines to be extended, where possible, to ensure that any applications are Fully and publicly discussed at meetings.
- We have set systems up so as to ensure that queries raised with outside bodies are followed through and expedited and not 'lost in the system'.
- Although no criticism has been raised about any financial issues we have installed a better reporting system so it is very clear at any moment in time exactly what monies are available.

I am aware that concerns have been expressed above the motivation of the Parish Council with suspicion expressed in particular about the motives of parish councillors with land interests within the parish.

Our code of conduct has very strict terms as to the behaviour of counsellors but I want to put to this meeting a document which specifies exactly what one ought to declare as an interest whether pecuniary or not. This is a document that is used by many councils round the country and after some considerable research this version seems to be most effective way of dealing with this issue.

We often take our lead from WODC with regard to these matters. Their policy on this matter is that once a counsellor has declared an interest they should take no part in the discussion or the vote and indeed should leave the meeting for that item. I am going to suggest that we do the same.

There may be occasions where the councillor concerned is able to share some background information on the subject that would help with the understanding of the matter then I am proposing that like WODC, that by permission of the chairman they can make a statement before withdrawing from the meeting.

We have published the standing orders and code of conduct and both now appear on the website. The rules on declaring interests will be published after their agreement by the PC.

Thank you for your time.

Nicky Brooks, Chair of the Parish Council, 7th January, 2020

APPENDIX 2

Email from Konstantin Lazarov on 7th January at 10:37

Actually I don't want to speak at the meeting tonight, but I like to point out to you what I think is missing from the minutes from the last meeting and if you can make amendments.

1. PC Conservation area vote :-when Martin and Mark give reason why they voted against and not supporting conservation area- chopping trees in their garden.
2. Planning, Bantam Lodge:
 - Dick was standing up and was arguing with Eileen and Rachel, everything what Dick say has been recorded, but no records from Eileen or Rachel.
 - If you remember Eileen stood up and make a big speech over her application - She started with "I'm honourable person and I'm the person that they are talking about, and then she started explaining her application.

I wanted to talk about the code of conduct as well.

My question is:

As far I understand in your email to Dick last week you were saying that the WODC code of conduct has been adopted for long time by the PC, and now you are adopting NALC which is much more detailed.

My concern is that in both above cases that are not recorded in the minutes you don't apply the WODC code of conduct.

1. Martin Wilson and Mark-WODC code of conduct number 3. Selflessness-you must serve only the public interest. 6. Openness - as well apply.
2. Bantam Lodge Eileen - Registering and declaring interest
 - Number 19:Unless dispensation has been granted, you may not participate in any discussion of, vote on, or discharge any function related to any matter in which you have a pecuniary interest as defined by regulations made by the Secretary of State. You must withdraw from the room or chamber when the meeting discusses and votes on the matter.

Some how for me becomes to look like that Eileen has been always treated differently, no minutes from her planing application in 2016, and no records of her in the last meeting.

It is not fair that code of conduct has been apply only for the public, and the villagers receive the email from you that the code of conduct was only showing the bit about public order,I found this a bit odd.

Konstantin