



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES PARISH COUNCIL
Old Stables 20:00 Thursday 09th December 2019

Members Present:

Chairman Jim Donahue
 Members Jonathan Steward
 Diana Smith

Officers Present:

Clerk Jim Donahue - Acting

Public and Press:

Jane Yamamoto, Leslie & Dave Maynard, Jeanette Cabeldu, Chris Martin, Will Barclay, Peter Dragonetti

The meeting started at: 20:00

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| 1 | Apologies for absence & read Mission Statement – Cllrs Hatcher, Higley, and Grosfort sent their apologies | 20:00 |
| 2 | Declaration of Interests by Councillors on any items on the Agenda. | |
| 3 | <p>Update on interviews for new Clerk – Cllr Donahue recommended the Council vote to approve Jane Yamamoto as the new clerk, subject to references and signed contract (one reference was received prior to the meeting). Jane has extensive office management and financial management experience as has been included in many local activities such as Secretary of PAWS and volunteering for the British Legion. She has been a resident of the Village for 17 years. As she is new to the role of Clerk, Cllr Donahue will with work with her to ensure a gradual transition over the next few months, including getting her the necessary training.</p> <p>Resolution: Councillors unanimously voted for Jane Yamamoto to join the council as Clerk subject to references and signed contract.</p> | 20:05 |
| 4 | <p>Public Forum - an opportunity for members of the public to express their point of view on any item on the agenda. With the Chairman’s permission, a member of the public may express their point of view on specific items of business. Five minutes are reserved per item.</p> <p>Leslie Maynard spoke about how and why the boat and the landscaping at the Church Bell Mouth came to be developed. She distributed pictures of how it used to look and pictures of the improvements made. As the village is an AONB, the site reflected badly upon it. Cllr Steward, who was a councillor at the time, asked what could be done about it. A Working Group, MOWS (Make Our Whitchurch Special), was created. The owner of the house behind the site, Sally Howard attended every meeting and gave her approval to all with the proviso that she would not have to do anything. Sally Woolhouse created</p> | 20:10 |

drawings and the Council agreed to a budget for up to £500/year for plants and materials. Geoff Weir constructed and designed sleepers. Stan Remington paid for many of the plants and also paid for the bench. Others, from the Whitchurch society, for example, Sally Woolhouse, donated plants, with the addition of the slate chippings. Beale Park gifted the boat and a tap outside near the site. After the planting, the former derelict site received a Highly Commended from the RHS. The Arts and Craft Group did wonderful displays involving many primary and pre-school children. David Maynard and Peter Woolhouse improved the appearance of the boat and it was re-varnished by Cllr Steward.

Earlier this year, Sally Howard asked that the boat be removed at the end of the season due to controversy over it. Leslie Maynard said that it would have been considerate if the PC and MOWS team had been notified of when and where it was to be moved. She asked if the beds are to be removed as well as Sally Howard had just requested for just the boat to be removed. She stated that some of the village residents suggested that it was vandalism and criminal. She asked the Council to reflect upon the wishes of the majority of the residents that the removal of the boat was wrong considering that Sally Howard had agreed to everything and had allowed others to spend a great deal of time, effort and money on the site.

Will Barclay said that when the boat was originally proposed, many people disagreed. He spoke about the historical value of the three Bell Mouths within the village. He stated that the most worrying issue was that the Council did not understand what a Conservation Area was. What had been placed at this site was entirely inappropriate. He also said that none of the correct protocols had been followed: No risk assessments were completed and no planning permission was sought. He also said that he had written to the Council to ask what to do with the items. Cllr Donahue asked him to hold off removing any more materials for the time being.

Cllr Steward confirmed that planning permission would be necessary for anyone to have the boat displayed. Cllr Smith advised that it would mean that it was out of the hands of the Council. Cllr Donahue said that the ownership of the land would need to be confirmed. He advised that the boat was currently being kept safe at The Mill House and it had not been decided who would have the boat, if anyone. Cllrs Smith and Donahue acknowledged how much work had been put into the site and that the Council had supported the MOWS team.

The Council would discuss the matter and decide what actions should be taken. Cllr Donahue promised to respond to Will Barclay about what should be done with any items from the area. He hoped that all affected parties could agree a constructive way forward and to clear the divisiveness within the village.

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| 5 | <p>Chairman's Announcements.</p> <p>Cllr Donahue held a meeting on flooding with interested members of the village to discuss actions required to prevent flooding. Topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvements to draining Whitchurch Hill, that was recently completed by OCC. They plan to fill the new ditches with porous material before removing the safety fences. - High street drains maintenance – being led by Warren Beard - Culvert along Eastfield lane that was partially blocked in 2014, causing flooding – recommendations from Richard Wingfield and John Southey to have it inspected and ensure affected landowners are aware of their responsibilities - Cllr Donahue will be calling for volunteers to meet in a village Emergency Management meeting to follow on the work John Bradon initiated under the Village Plan <p>Green Team led two volunteer activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One on Manor Road Recreation facility - Another on Muddy lane. The Muddy lane activity was well turned out - He wanted to encourage other councillors and members of the community to join these working parties in the future <p>The New Pavilion WG has submitted grant application for SODC – up to £75,000 – should get results by March. Thanks to Frances Dixon and the NPWG team for supporting this.</p> <p>Village Plan 2019 to be issued shortly in PDF format. Printed copies to follow in the New Year. PC is already progressing on many of the initiatives and our proposed budget for the next few years includes estimates to progress additional initiatives.</p> | 20:15 |
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| 6 | <p>To approve minutes of the meeting of 14th November 2019</p> <p>Resolution: Minutes with attachments approved.</p> | 20:20 |
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| 7 | <p>Planning Applications – to discuss and agree Council's response to the following:</p> | 20:25 |
| 7.1 | <p>P19/S3428/HH - 1 & 2 Old Barn Cottages High Street Whitchurch On Thames RG8 7EZ</p> <p>No 1: Replace rear conservatory with kitchen extension. Reduction in roof overhang. Nos 1 & 2: Replace front porch.</p> <p>Resolution: The Council voted to submit 'No objections'.</p> | |
| 7.2 | <p>BP buildings for renovation. Peter Dragonetti said that the company was not increasing the numbers of personnel on site, but eliminating extraction plants and there would be a collaboration of the buildings. Cllr Smith recommended that the village should be notified of any large lorries or the need for traffic management. Cllr Donahue asked for an extension of the consultation period to allow this to be discussed at the January 9th PC meeting.</p> | |

| 7.3 | Resolution: The Council agreed that Cllr Smith would handle Eastfield Lane planning applications and Cllr Steward would handle the Manor Road applications. | | | | | | | |
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| 8 | To receive reports from the representatives of Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council. No further update provided by Cllr Dragonetti this month. | 20:35 | | | | | | |
| 8.1 | <p>SODC District Councillor Report - Peter Dragonetti reported that the SODC's finances were not in a brilliant state and that their reserves would run out. They were spending more than the income from taxes. SODC were first of all, pressing on with the offices at Crowmarsh so they will save money on rent. Secondly, they will have a full council meeting on December 18th where a motion will be to be proposed to integrate more with the Vale. They would maintain the same number of councillors, but should save considerable money by sharing offices, machinery and IT facilities. There also will be a motion to be proposed for green and liberal things e.g., cycling to meetings and views on parish forums.</p> <p>Peter Dragonetti also said he attended a meeting of the District Councillors in Henley. He said there was another one approximately 3 years ago. If Parishes are not interested in going, there was no point in running them. A survey was sent to the Chairman to see what Parish Councillors want. Cllr Donahue to review and to complete the survey.</p> | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Finance | 20:45 | | | | | | |
| 9.1 | <p>To approve the payment schedule for December</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="204 1108 1377 1294"> <thead> <tr> <th>Payment</th> <th>Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Mode transport consultant</td> <td>£900</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Old Stable Room hire – Clerk interview and PC Meeting</td> <td>£30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Cllr Donahue will send payment. The Clerk to invoice the Allotment Society in January 2020.</p> | Payment | Amount | Mode transport consultant | £900 | Old Stable Room hire – Clerk interview and PC Meeting | £30 | |
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| Mode transport consultant | £900 | | | | | | | |
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| 10 | Conservation area assessment quotes update – Cllr Higley – deferred until January due Cllr Higley's apologies | 20:50 | | | | | | |
| 11 | <p>Update on repair of Manor Road Pillar</p> <p>Cllr Smith has received a quotation from a contractor for £1,845 based. She was awaiting another quotation and hopes to have this for the January meeting. Cllr Donahue agreed approach the Copart that originally caused the damage after the quotes to see if they would the new quote, or as a minimum, the difference from what they had already paid towards the repair.</p> <p>Cllr Smith would send a letter to the paid contractor that they must pay back the money within 2 weeks, otherwise the Council would raise tis to the small claims court. The Cllrs will review this in January.</p> | 21:00 | | | | | | |

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| 12 | Proposal for new Kitchen for Village Hall – Cllr Grosfort – deferred until January due Cllr Grosfort’s apologies. | 21:10 |
| 13 | <p>To review progress on any open actions from previous Parish Council meetings and agree any revision of actions on the action list - including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PC 131 - Cllr Steward to get 2 more quotes for weedkilling for a decision at the next meeting. Given the nature of the work, local tradesmen not interested in quoting for the weed killing work unless it is part of an overall maintenance contract. Informal feedback shows that the Azalea quote is reasonable. <p>Resolution: Add the extra weed killing to the existing maintenance contract. This will extend the existing contract from High Street to include Manor Road and Swanston Field and move from once per year to four times per year. It will not be poison, but a form a strong vinegar.</p> | 21:20 |
| 14 | <p>Confidential Business - To consider and, if thought fit, approve the following motion: In view of the confidential nature of the business about to transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw. Resolution: unanimously approved.</p> | |
| 15 | <p>To discuss the Council’s position on whether further action is required to address the landscaping in front of the Bell Mouth at the Church</p> <p>The councillors acknowledged the feedback that has been received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People feel the way the boat was removed without consulting or thanking the people who spent so much time developing the area, or even notifying the PC, was not done in a transparent or respectful manner. - Mrs. Howard had just asked for the boat to be removed at the end of the summer, not for the beds and stones to be removed as well. A Council representative should meet with Mrs. Howard directly to understand her wishes. - The PC and MOWS spent a lot of effort and money working to improve this area and it doesn't make sense to remove everything completely from environmental recycling and cost perspectives. This work was supported by a large portion of the community as evidenced by these letters received and was also supported by Mrs. Howard. - Any change to the area should ideally build upon what is already there as many people appreciate it. <p>Given that the ownership of the land is now uncertain, we agreed to take the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action: Cllr Donahue to request title of the land from the land registry. He is authorised to pay for this if required. - If we conclude that there is no evidence of Mrs Howard's ownership of the land, we should continue to work with local organisations to maintain the areas building off of existing landscaping. | 21:30 |

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| | <p>- If Mrs. Howard provides evidence of ownership, we should defer to her wishes, but would still encourage her to work to build off of the current landscaping as opposed to complete removal of it.</p> <p>- We should encourage any landowner interested in taking the boat on to apply for planning permission before moving it there. The planning process would request feedback from immediate neighbours and the rest of the village. If the Bellmouth is determined to be public land, then we could consider applying for planning permission to move it back, but it seems that the boat or a similar display may be more appropriately located in front of one of the pubs.</p> | |
| 16 | <p>To review draft budget for 2020-21 and agree precept</p> <p>Cllr Donahue advised that the precept was raised 7-8 years ago for the village green. However, it had not been raised in at least the past 4-5 years. Cllr Donahue confirmed SIL payment should be allocated towards a future pavement project. Cllr Donahue said there was some uncertainty on who paid for the VG water bills last year. Cllr Steward said that the Cricket Club was happy to pay for the use of the water from the horse paddock.</p> <p>Action: Clerk to talk to the Cricket Club to sort out the water at the pavilion.</p> <p>Resolution: The PC approved the 2020-21 budget and agreed to keep the current precept.</p> | 21:45 |
| 17 | To confirm the date and time of the next Meeting. 09 January, 2020 at 20:00, Village Hall | |
| 18 | Meeting Close at 21:50. | 22:00 |
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