

# Wootton Rivers Parish Council

## Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 11th January 2021

<b>Present:</b>	Cindy Creasy	Parish Council Chair
	David Butler	Parish Council Vice Chair (part)
	Clare Bamforth	Councillor
	Dean Cowley	Councillor
	Steve Rawlings	Councillor
	Anne Swift	Councillor
	Neil Worthington	Clerk

Apologies received from Nick Jones and Jerry Kunkler

Cindy Creasy welcomed councillors and members of the public to this meeting of the Parish Council as authorised by the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 issued during the current pandemic.

### **1. Declarations of Interest and the granting of dispensations.**

Councillors were reminded of the Code for Conduct and the need to declare any interest relating to the items on the Agenda. Dean Cowley declared an interest in the item to authorise a donation to the Church.

### **2. Agreement of Minutes**

The Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 9th November 2020 were agreed as a true record and will be signed by Cindy Creasy, Chair.

### **3. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Permanent village maps – Anne Swift reported that she had obtained a quote for 2 permanent village map signs which would cost approximately £2500. It was agreed that this was unaffordable. It was agreed to replace the current signs with new ones fixed to new plywood backboards. Steve Rawlings offered to provide a sheet of suitable ply and Neil Worthington agreed to fit the new boards and also to provide new back boards to the village notice boards which were de-laminating.

*Action: Steve Rawlings/Neil Worthington*

The possibility of having a village tourist information board was raised again and the current cost was to be established.

*Action: Cindy Creasy*

WCAG website Regulations – Neil Worthington reported that the website developer had agreed to carry out an assessment of the website to see if any changes were required to meet the new regulations for website accessibility.

Pontings Piece trees – Wiltshire Council had inspected the area and advised that they considered that the planting is causing no obstruction or damage to adjoining property and therefore no action will be taken. The concerned resident is to be advised of the situation.

*Action: Neil Worthington*

#### **4. Police matters**

The Police.uk website recorded 2 crimes in Wootton Rivers in November 2020 (1 allocated as Criminal damage & arson, and 1 as a Public order offence). There are also statistics relating to overall levels of crime in the Devizes police area on a historical basis.

Nick Mitchell-Briggs reported that online fraud and dog theft were both increasing and any reports he received from the Police were circulated rapidly using the village email system – this now reached the vast majority of households in the village. He was concerned about the lack of communication he received from the police following his community intelligence reports and would take this up with them. However, the police response to the recent burglary in the village was reassuring and resulted in an arrest.

#### **5. Update on Road Maintenance etc**

Following constant chasing of the Highways Dept the local engineer has been to the village and proposed making changes to the drainage system to prevent further flooding of the road outside the Church. The open drain inlets between the village hall and church were to be replaced with standard gullies and the position of the brick screen inside the drain interceptor was to be altered to allow more silt to settle before it caused an obstruction. If these changes did not prevent flooding then another silt trap higher up in the village would be considered.

It was agreed to write to the engineer stating that it is apparent from local observation that until the issue of silt entering the drain system from the Clench and East Wick roads was addressed, the problem would not be permanently resolved. The issue of the constantly blocked gulley at the bottom of Primrose Hill was also discussed and this was to be referenced in the letter as an example of work being carried out which was ineffective due to the local conditions.

It was agreed that the ditch which diverted water from the top end of the village into the canal and ran behind the houses on the east of the village was to be checked to see if it was clear of vegetation and running freely. *Action: Steve Rawlings*

Highways have agreed to clean the gullies in the village every 2 months and this would include the ones in the north of the village which were missed last time.

#### **6. Planning**

A planning application reference no 20/11253/FUL had recently been received for a new feed store and cattle accommodation at Lady Margaret Farm – it was agreed that this would need to be considered at a separate meeting to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Cindy Creasy gave an update on the current position about the proposed changes to the national planning process and how they may affect Wootton Rivers.

The Govt consultation about changes to the national planning framework has now closed and a Bill is expected later this year. Proposals in the consultation included a more centrally set policy with less local input and land for development divided into growth, renewal, or protect categories.

Additional changes to the planning framework were also proposed which would take effect more quickly. These included the use of an algorithm which directed development towards the south of England (this has now been dropped due to

hostile feedback from MP's and Councillors) and the rules for use of rural exception sites at the edge of villages for affordable housing. This could affect WR and we needed to be aware of this possibility.

One of the items highlighted in the response prepared by Wiltshire Council to the Government's National Planning Policy consultation related to Neighbourhood Plans and new changes which were made in 2019 to the National Planning Policy Framework. These 2019 changes mean that NP's more than 2 years old will have less weight placed on them when considering planning applications if councils fell short of their 5 year housing land supply target. This is currently the case in Wiltshire who only have a 4.56 year supply – a shortfall of 900 houses. The shortfall could be made up by developers offering to build anywhere in the county and could outweigh the present weight given to both the Local Plan and our neighbourhood plan.

On the basis of a WALPA briefing from Council Officers such planning bids should not be seen as a foregone conclusion and it should be possible to make a good argument against untoward development proposals due to factors such as existing approvals, sustainability and the registering of vulnerable areas like the recreation ground as green space. In a conversation with Cllr Toby Sturgess (Lead Cllr for planning at WC) he explained that he felt the risk to small villages was less with most applications typically being for larger sites.

However, this issue will persist until Wiltshire address the shortfall in land supply. Cindy had attended the WALPA meeting group of town and village councils with NP's and they plan to lobby councillors to back local communities. Officers are generally sympathetic and want to keep to the local plans but need the support of councillors and local MP's.

Advice received regarding the NP is that as it is now 3 years old it will need a full review rather than a desk top review which was our previous understanding. This is likely to include the need for a housing needs survey. Wiltshire Council would provide support to review the plan if there was a significant change in planning circumstances eg a change in the Wiltshire plan or the national framework.

Wiltshire's local plan is now 5 years old and a consultation has started for a complete review. Online meetings are planned and Clare Bamforth and Dean Cowley also agreed to attend in addition to Cindy and formulate a response to bring back to the PC for approval.

## **7. Finance**

### Financial Report 2020/21

The current financial position was reported as follows:-

#### Balance at Bank

Deposit Account	2,443.93
Current Account	<u>4,572.77</u>
Total funds in bank	<u>£7,016.70</u>

The amount set aside for maintenance work and replacement equipment for the Recreation Ground within this figure is £1040 (VH & dog-training donations).

### 2020/21 Budget Review

Expenditure at the end of the financial year was expected to be approximately £40 over budget :-

Agreed Budget		£4050.00
Expenditure to date	3422.00	
Anticipated further expenditure (excluding contingency)	<u>669.00</u>	

Anticipated Total Expenditure £4091.00

### Income/Payments

A donation of £40 had been received from Lucy Ward for use of the Recreation Ground for her dog training classes.

No further payments had been received but Ford Fuel had provided figures showing that 148,733 litres of oil had been purchased through the BEAM group and the rebate of £743.67 had been requested. This was a slight increase in oil used compared to the previous 12 months and provides a substantial addition to Council funds reducing the amount of tax needing to be raised. Nick Mitchell-Briggs was thanked for his efforts in signing up residents to the scheme.

No payments had been made since those authorised at the PC meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 but the first annual direct debit payment of £35.00 to the Information Commissioners Office had been taken.

The following payments were authorised to be paid via BACS

1. Idverde invoice dated 22.12.20 for grass cutting the Recreation Ground £276.38
2. PCAP donation as agreed last meeting £50.00
3. Neil Worthington for payments made for Zoom (Dec & Jan) £28.78 and Viking for printer ink & paper £54.44 – total £83.22
4. Donation to St Andrew's Church to assist with grounds maintenance for 2020/21 - £100.00
5. Codewater Solutions – website hosting for 2020/21- £80.00

### Budget and Precept

A draft budget for 2021/22 had been issued to Councillors prior to the meeting based on the essential Parish Council spending with optional expenditure for various other items included, which were agreed in principle but which would require authorisation before payment. The budget was therefore agreed at £4,056. Assuming that the BEAM contribution would be the same as 2020/21 the amount to be raised from the precept was £3,313. The precept last year was £3,188.06 and following discussions two options were proposed

1. Increase the precept to £3204.99 which would keep the amount shown on the Council tax bill for the Parish Council as 0% increase. The increase is due to the Tax Base increasing.
2. Increase the precept to £3,313.00 which would show an increase on the council tax bill of 3.37% This would increase the Parish Council portion of council tax bills by £0.85p per annum for a Band D property.

Option 2 was chosen by a majority vote of the Council, which would fully fund the budget and leave the reserves intact for unforeseen circumstances.

## **8. Miscellaneous Items**

### Annual Clean up

It was agreed that the clean up which was missed in 2020 should take place in mid-March assuming it was permitted by Covid regulations. Cindy Creasy agreed to come up with a plan. *Action: Cindy Creasy*

Neil Worthington advised that he had been notified that Graham Cooper who farms at Easton Royal now has a snow plough which he had offered for use in the event of heavy snowfall. Although this was welcome it was not the ideal equipment for use in the sunken lanes around WR. David Butler advised that he would do his best to keep at least one access road clear as it would be needed for his milk tanker.

Anne Swift advised that the rights of way group needed to move forward with getting new signage from Wiltshire and with trying to get landowners to replace stiles with kissing gates or where possible just leaving gaps. *Action: Anne Swift/ David Butler to liaise*

There was an issue with cutting hedgerows on land which was previously part of the Antrobus Estate north of Little House and David Butler undertook to speak to the current owner and, with their permission, cut the hedges. *Action: David Butler*

**Date of the next meeting (planning) – 25th January 2021 at 7.30pm – this will be a virtual meeting held on the Zoom platform**

**Dates for 2021 PC meetings** 15 March, 10 May (Annual meeting), 12 July, 6<sup>th</sup> Sept, 15 Nov