

Wootton Rivers Parish Council

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 14th November 2022

Present:

Dean Cowley	Parish Council Chair
Clare Bamforth	Councillor
Cindy Creasy	Councillor
Nick Jones	Councillor
Steve Rawlings	Councillor
Julian Beames	Clerk

1. **Apologies for absence:** None received

2. **Agreement of Minutes**

The draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 3rd of October 2022 were agreed as a true record and were signed by Dean Cowley - Chair.

3. Councillors were reminded of the Code for Conduct and the need to declare any interest relating to the items on the agenda. No declarations were made.

4. **Report from Wiltshire Councillor**

Jerry Kunkler was unable to attend the meeting but provided an up-date via email.

The next area board will be held at Great Bedwyn Village Hall on Monday the 28th of this month and the following meeting will be on the 27th of February at Pewsey. The Budget setting process has been going on for some time now and we await the outcome of this budget on Thursday to see if we will have any assistance. Hopefully after maintenance work on the drains recently we will be getting nearer to sorting out the flooding problem. Jerry has been assured that the root problem is in the work programme at the highways maintenance team. The next LHFIG meeting is set for January 25th which remains on teams. Jerry has asked Perry Holmes for an indication on what the proposals are for possible charging of Parish Councils for elections. As soon as he has his response, he will pass this on.

5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

- i) Relocation of the Railway Ticket Office – A meeting was held to which any villagers interested in the project were invited. There was a good turnout of interested people and after a short outline of the project was given by Anne Swift, participants were able to ask questions and make comments. This was followed by a visit to the site of the railway hut on Primrose Hill, where the structure was inspected. The general feeling amongst the group was that it was definitely worth trying to put a scheme together for approval, to move the hut to the Recreation Ground. It was agreed that a further meeting would be planned to start the put together a firm proposal with the help of the interested residents and members of the Recreation Ground Committee. The Clerk would organise the meetings and the intention would be to come to the Council with a proposal for approval early in the New Year.

- ii) Recreation Ground Tree Survey - The agents for St John's College have notified the Parish Council that a tree survey has been commissioned. We are still awaiting their report and it will now be chased. Action - Clerk
- iii) Emergency Planning – In the absence of Councillor Butler this item was deferred.

6. Planning

Applications Approved

It was noted that the following application has been approved by the planners: PL/2022/05565 – Blanchard Barns – Forest Road – Approved with the condition that the entrance roadway in front of the gates in made up. The Chair expressed his concerns that this had been approved despite the objections of the Parish Council and undertook to write to Jerry Kunkler to express the Parish Council's concerns.

Applications Received - PL/2022/08577 - Proposed works to Trees - Noyes Farm House – This will be handled by the Clerk under delegation and a No Objection response will be entered.

7. Roads & Drainage

The work to upgrade the drains on Forest Road is on-going and seems to be progressing well. This will hopefully help reduce future problems. The recent clearing of the drain near the canal seems to have improved the situation greatly with no further major floods despite heavy rains. A longer-term fix to stop the drain becoming blocked is, we are assured, in the Highways works programme.

A second closure of Forest Road is planned for 1st - 3rd December to undertake patching works. This will likely mean the road will be completely blocked (unlike recently, where cars have been able to pass through the works area). Residents should plan accordingly as they may have to exit the village in the opposite direction to which they might have wished.

8. Finance Report

The Clerk reported that the bank balances were as follows:

Treasurers Account	£2,722.08
Business Bank Account	£6,575.06

Payments to be approved since the last meeting were:

Wessex Print Centre – Contact Newsletter	£30.00
Huck Nets – Replacement Golf Nets	£372.07

Payment to be authorised:

Clerk's annual salary	£1,615
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The payments were approved and authorised unanimously

9. Request from St Andrews Church for Funds to Maintain the Church Grounds

A letter had been received by the Parish Council from the treasurer of the PCC requesting a financial contribution from the Parish Council to cover 50% of the cost of maintaining the church grounds. This would amount to approximately £1,000 per year currently, which would be equivalent to adding approximately £8 to the annual

council tax for the average band D property in the village. Councillors were asked by the Chair for their views. It was generally felt that whilst, as the letter had pointed out, the church does provide parishioners with the right to be buried and have their ashes interred, the Church charges for these services and therefore parishioners who benefit also pay for the services. In addition, with the current pressures on the precept (additional costs potentially being passed down by Wiltshire Council and the reducing income from BEAM), it was felt that now was not the right time to increase the precept by 30% to fund this proposal, especially as only a small percentage of the villagers would directly benefit.

A motion to reject the proposal was proposed and unanimously passed.

Action: - Clerk to respond to the PCC to inform them of the Council's position.

10. Other Miscellaneous Matters

- i) Wiltshire Warm Spaces – The Chair sought the views of the Councillors on whether the village needed to take any action with regards to providing a warm space for residents. It was generally felt this was not required but that the village co-ordinators should keep an eye on situation to make sure vulnerable residents weren't in need of help.
- ii) Contact Newsletter – Linda Hopkins sought the opinions of Councillors on whether there was continued need for the Contact Newsletter as she was struggling to obtain input to fill the quarterly schedule. Councillors all felt that it should be retained and suggested some actions to assist in getting the content required for each edition.
- iii) The condition of the Road opposite the entrance to Noyes Farm was raised by the Chair and the Clerk undertook to raise this again with Highways. Action – Clerk to raise a MyWilts case
- iv) BEAM - The Clerk reported that this year's BEAM contribution had been invoiced and it was reduced from last year's level of £883 to down to £569 this year. A reduction had been anticipated but it was less than budgeted. The reasons for the reduction were discussed. It was generally felt that the milder weather, the high cost of oil and also the fact that residents were 'shopping around' for a better deal were all factors. Recent reports of the BEAM price being significantly higher than other quotes were very concerning. The Clerk and Nicholas Mitchell Briggs will contact the Burbage group leaders to see if they can ensure better pricing, to maintain confidence in the scheme and provide residents with lower prices and protect the Council's income from BEAM. An update will be given before Christmas to try and balance the recent negative messages

11. Report on Police Matters

PCSO Jonathan Mills had attended the previous week's Coffee Morning at the Royal Oak as part of his efforts to engage the community. He had provided insight into the activities he and his colleagues undertake locally in tackling local crime. He will try to attend future meetings as and when his schedule allows.

12. Date of the next Meeting

The date of the next scheduled meeting will be on the Monday 9th January 2023

Signed as a true record.....Date

Dean Cowley – Chair