

# Wootton Rivers Parish Council

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023

### Present:

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

1. **Apologies for absence:** David Butler

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

The draft minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2023 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 reported that Wiltshire Council budget had been passed and that as a result the responsibility for paying election costs had been transferred to Parish Councils. This means Parish councils will now have to include this expense in their budgets and add this cost to the parish precept to have sufficient funds in their accounts to cover the costs.

Jerry also reported that a new contractor, Milestone Infrastructure Ltd. had been appointed by Wiltshire Highways to replace the current one. This could lead to new staff being appointed.

The next Local Highways and Footpaths (LHFIG) meeting will take place on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April and the next Area Board Meeting is on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

Councillor Jones asked Jerry about what appeared to be a spike in the number of local crimes and if he had any information on what was going on. Jerry responded that as a result of some of the recent incidents he had contacted the local Inspector who covered Pewsey and surrounding area to talk to him about the recent incidents. He was concerned that there seemed to be little response and that the Police had not visited the people affected. He said he was minded to invite the new Chief Constable to the next area board meeting and was also due to be attending a meeting at which the Police and Crime Commissioner would also be attending, and these would be opportunities to raise these concerns again.

Councillor Creasy asked Jerry when he thought the new local plan would be in place and he stated that according to the information he had this was now due to be published in the autumn of 2023.

## 5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

- i) Relocation of the Railway Ticket Office – An on-site meeting had been held at the recreation ground headed by Sam Keyes-Toyer to decide the layout of the new facilities which are planned and to agree the overall plan. A layout has now been agreed for the new play area, petanque pitch and picnic area and the site for the Heritage hut (post meeting note: It is now expected that the plan will be presented to the Council at the next Council meeting for approval to move forward).
- ii) Submission to Government's consultation on NPPF - Councillor Creasy reported that she had submitted a response to the Government's consultation on the New Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The comments supported the proposed changes to the 5-year land supply rules and new rules to stop developers banking land which had development approval but not actually building on it, but then pushing for more land to be approved for development. The comments also supported a new proposal that developers would be judged on their past behaviour especially in terms of gaining approval for developments and then coming back with changes which then tried to push the scope of the development further. The comments have also been shared with WALPA. This report again raised the issue of the power of our own Neighbourhood Plan to continue to control development and the need to review it in the coming years with the difficulties of doing this, when there has been no substantial changes in the village due to its small size.

**6. Planning** – An application has very recently been received concerning tree works at Bay Tree Cottage and this will be handled by the Clerk under his delegation.

**7. Roads & Drainage** – The Clerk reported that the planned drainage improvements at the bottom of Martinsell Hill have now been carried out and although technically outside our parish this will be welcomed by residents. A new drainage ditch has been created along a length of the road and a bank built up in front of it with reflective road edge markers built into it. This takes water off the road and into a soakaway and will hopefully stop this area becoming flooded in the future.

The road surface at the junction opposite the entrance to Noyes Farmyard was also discussed and the Clerk reported that although it is rough and not ideal, there are no large potholes at present (following some recent patching) This area is always going to be a problem area due to the amount of wear it receives from heavy farm machinery using the lane. The Clerk stated he would add the area to the list of places to be monitored by the Steward during his visits.

## 8. Finance Report

The Clerk reported that the bank balances were as follows:

Treasurers Account	£916.07
Business Bank Account	£6,585.82

The clerk also reported that as we moved towards the end of the financial year the Council's operational spending was roughly on budget with potentially a small surplus. The Council had invested in a new replacement defibrillator which would obviously increase the overall spending.

Payments to be approved since the last meeting were:	
IdVerde – Grass Cutting	£276.38
Wessex Print Centre – Contact printing	£32.00
Village Hall Hire Fees for Council Meetings	£144.00

The payments were approved and authorised unanimously.

**9. Report on Police Matters**

It was mentioned by Councillor Jones that there did seem to be a spike in crime in the local area with the recent burglary in the village and at the local shop in Burbage, and the recent theft of a van from Easton Royal being examples.

**10. Correspondence Received –** The Clerk stated that he had just received a notification from Wiltshire Council regarding the availability of Government energy support for off-grid homes. This includes residents living in canal boats and therefore the Council might want to make these residents aware of the scheme. It was agreed that a note would be sent via the village email system to alert residents to the schemes for both off-grid homes and those using pre-payment meters of the schemes and how to benefit from them and Councillors would also speak to known boat residents.

**11. Any other Matters**

Councillor Bamforth notified the meeting that the Village Hall AGM will be held on the 25th of April at 7:30 pm in the Village Hall.

The Chair mentioned that he had recently noticed a person camping out close to Heathy Close lock and that he had spoken to the individual. The situation would be monitored, and the Street Link Team would be contacted to assist if the individual hadn't moved on.

**12. Next Meeting**

The next scheduled meetings will be the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council which will both be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. The Annual Parish Meeting will start at 7:30pm and will be directly followed by the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

Signed as a true record.....Date .....  
Dean Cowley – Chair