

Wootton Rivers Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 6th September 2021

Present:	Dean Cowley	Parish Council Chair
	Clare Bamforth	Vice Chair
	David Butler	Councillor
	Cindy Creasy	Councillor
	Nick Jones	Councillor
	Steve Rawlings	Councillor
	Anne Swift	Councillor
	Neil Worthington	Clerk

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 planning application for tree work at Somersets Farm and withdrew from the meeting while this item was decided.

2. Agreement of Minutes

The Draft Minutes of the Parish Council Meetings held on the 5th July 2021 and 16th August 2021 were agreed as a true record and signed by Dean Cowley.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Verge cutting – Wiltshire Highways new policy of cutting roadside verges once a year to encourage biodiversity had resulted in safety concerns due to the decreased visibility. Highways had been contacted and they had quickly cut the various areas which had been identified by the Parish Council as causing most concern.

The issue had also been raised with PCAP and supported by other parishes.

Wiltshire Highways have now requested parish councils to identify verges where additional cuts are necessary so that they can be included in their review of the policy.

Action: Clerk

Notice board repair – Neil Worthington reported he had refurbished one of the notice boards and would shortly start on the other one. The cost of materials purchased so far was approximately £106 + VAT which was slightly above the estimate.

Clerk Vacancy – Cindy Creasy had drawn up an advert for the position and this would be circulated via email and notice boards. The intention was to recruit a candidate from the village but this was dependent upon the response.

Recreation Ground – David Butler had been able to remove the fallen branch from the climbing frame/net and there had been no damage to the play equipment.

4. Police matters

Neil Worthington had checked the police website for the latest dates available and there was a record of one recorded crime in the parish, a burglary, in June/July.

Nick Mitchell-Briggs reported the police community engagement was minimal and that online crime continued to be a major issue.

5. Recreation Ground

Clare Bamforth reported that the Village Hall Management Committee had taken on responsibility for the Recreation Ground including fund raising, safety inspections etc.

It had been suggested that the ring-fenced money held by the PC could be handed over to the VHMC so they could control expenditure etc.

Following discussions, it was decided that as the PC could reclaim VAT paid on purchases it would be sensible for payments to still go through the Parish Council. However so that the VHMC could have the flexibility to take action quickly the PC agreed that the VHMC could go ahead with purchases up to the value of £500 without having to get PC approval which could be carried out retrospectively, although the Clerk should be kept informed of forthcoming expenditure as is the situation now.

In order to reclaim VAT it was necessary for invoices/receipts to be addressed to the Parish Council.

Applications for grants, especially to the Area Board, should be made in the name of the Village Hall Committee rather than the Parish Council.

There had been an issue with the width of the access gap into the Recreation Ground which was too narrow for easy pushchair or wheelchair access and the main gate needed a sign to prevent parking to ensure the grass cutting contractor can get access.
Action: Steve Rawlings/Clare Bamforth

6. Broadband Summit

Julian Beames had attended the virtual meeting hosted by Danny Kruger and reported that Openreach's latest plans were to upgrade the Marlborough and Pewsey exchanges to enable ultrafast broadband to be expanded. However, Wootton Rivers is not covered as part of this plan but it is getting closer. If we wanted to lobby for inclusion we would probably have to team up with Milton Lilbourne and Easton Royal.

The option of the voucher scheme wasn't realistic as the shortfall in finance would have to be met by users. The alternative commercial schemes were considered unlikely to be supported by enough residents due to the considerable cost and the commitment which would need to be made to one provider. A straw poll of residents attending the meeting indicated that most people were reasonably happy with the current service level.

It was agreed to keep a watching brief on the roll out of the new Marlborough exchange upgrade which should be before 2023 and, when it is due to commence, we should start lobbying Openreach to expand it to include our area.

7. Planning

Application PL/2021/08373 – Tree work at Somersets Farm

The work proposed to reduce and shape a holly tree which was growing into overhead cables was unanimously agreed to be supported.

Application PL/2021/07619 - New Ponds near Ram Alley

It was agreed to check that the site was within the parish boundary. Post meeting note – confirmed with planners that the site was in Burbage Parish.

The delegated power given to the Clerk to decide minor planning applications was withdrawn as the restriction on holding meetings during the Covid epidemic had ceased. The delegated power for the clerk to decide on tree works remain subject to the agreed procedure for notification to Councillors etc.

The latest information and advice received from WALPA had been examined to decide whether we need to update our Neighbourhood Plan as it is now more than 2 years old. As Wiltshire Council have a shortfall in their 5 year land supply the NP could possibly be over-ruled to justify planning permission being granted in places where it would not normally be allowed.

It was considered that this is unlikely to have any impact on a small village such as Wootton Rivers and we should wait for WC's draft consultation plan before updating the NP in conjunction with it. It was agreed to contact WC to see if this interpretation of the situation is correct. *Action: Dean Cowley/Cindy Creasy*

It was noted that the NP runs until 2026 and was due for a review in 2023, but this may change once the situation is confirmed by Wiltshire Council.

8. Finance

The current financial position was reported as follows:-

Balance at Bank

Deposit Account 4,573.09

Current Account 4,713.68

Total funds in bank £9,286.77

of which £1040 was ring-fenced for Recreation Ground maintenance

Income/Payments

The following payment was approved for payment by BACS

Neil Worthington – materials for notice board repairs - £127.06

Budget

Neil Worthington reported that current expenditure was generally within budget except for the cost of the Village Hall rental for PC meetings which had increased due to the additional Covid cleaning costs - however the excess could be met out of the contingency.

9. Matters Raised by the Public

Contact – as 97% of the residents are on Nick Mitchell-Brigg's email list it had been suggested that the Contact newsletter could be distributed electronically. Following discussion, it was agreed to retain the current system as more volunteers to distribute the newsletter could be recruited if needed.

Green bin lorry – it had been noticed that the green waste bin lorry had again leaking liquid residue. Although the road staining did wash off in rain if it happens again the issue should be raised through PCAP to see if other parishes were concerned by the issue.

Road drainage below Martinsell – flooding in this area had occurred and work was needed to improve the drainage from the road. The large holes at the side of the road also needed filling to enable safe passing of vehicles. *Action: Clerk*

Road drainage works – the works promised had still not been carried out and a reminder was to be sent to the Highways Dept. *Action: Clerk*

Village hall lights – the light over the defibrillator needed the bulb replacing.
Action: Clerk

Date of the next meeting - 15th November 2021 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall