

Woodchester Parish Council

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Minutes of the Meeting of Woodchester Parish Council held on 5th July, 2018 in the Undercroft Room of St. Mary's Church at 7pm

Present: Cllrs. Hamilton, Baldauf, Baynham-Honri, Dunbar, McNealey and Warnes

In attendance: Julian Kent and Chris Horwood, Stroud District Council, the clerk and 5 members of the public.

Councillors agreed item 2018/85, a report from Julian Kent, Project Manager for the Southbank development be discussed as the first agenda item (see report below).

2018/76 To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr. Lead, County Councillor Steve Robinson and District Councillor Phil McAsey.

2018/77 To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

There were no declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

2018/78 To receive questions from members of the public and those attending in an official capacity.

A resident raised the issue of debris along the edges of the A46. The resident had been in contact with Stroud District Council (SDC) to ask that the area be cleared, but this had not yet been done. Councillors agreed the clerk contact SDC and ask that the road be swept.

2018/79 To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting 7th June, 2018.

These were confirmed and signed as a true record by Cllr. Hamilton.

2018/80 To receive the clerk's report.

An annual safety check was carried out on the Bike Trails by Cllr. Dunbar and the clerk which raised no safety issues. An inspection for April 2019 will be booked with RoSPA. The weekly checks continue, carried out by a team of volunteers.

It was noted the trees around the War Memorial on land owned by Woodchester House have been cut back.

2018/81 To receive County and District Councillor reports.

No reports had been received.

2018/82 To note the latest financial statements.

These were noted. It was agreed £2,000 be transferred from the current account back to reserves. This sum was moved to the current account in March 2017 to cover solicitor fees for the Bike Trails. Funds are now sufficient enough to replenish reserves.

2018/83 To approve expenditure and approve cheques as per annex.

These were approved and cheques signed at the end of the meeting.

2018/84 To note planning applications, decisions and appeals from SDC as per annex.

These were noted.

Initials.....

Revised plans have now been submitted for The Ram application which will be considered by the Planning Committee. The Parish Council had received confirmation that should the Planning Officer be minded to grant permission, the application will be discussed by the Development Control Committee. An amended submission was made to SDC following the original consultation as it was felt one particular comment might be misconstrued.

2018/85

To receive a report from Julian Kent, Project Manager for the Southbank development at Stroud District Council.

Mr. Kent and Mr. Horwood were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Kent apologised that the site at Southbank has been empty for an extended period of time and for its poor condition.

The delays have been due to issues with the contractors which has led to a recent termination of contract.

SDC have now regained possession of the site.

They are in the process of appointing new contractors, who must submit bids by 18th July. After a formal evaluation process, a contractor is expected to be appointed in September.

Following the appointment, the contractor will then have eight weeks to submit a detailed design. Completion is then expected to take ten months.

The Parish Council will be updated in September along with a letter drop to all residents in Southbank. Mr. Kent will also send a copy of the final plan of the site to the Parish Council.

Councillors and residents raised the following concerns:

- Potential damage to surrounding houses – Condition surveys will be carried out before building works commence.
- Traffic management and parking – A Traffic Management Plan will need to be approved before construction begins. Issues raised included the unofficial one-way system operated by the school, the congestion which is already present at the start and end of the school day, parking (of vehicles and skips) and whether contractors could park elsewhere, the need for the Village Hall car park to be kept clear.

It was suggested SDC might approach the Church and the owner of Woodchester House to ask about the potential to use their land for parking during construction.

Mr. Kent pointed out the difficulty in commenting on these issues without being able to discuss them with the contractor.

- Piling – Piling will be involved, but will take place for a short period of time and within working hours. Communication will be important, particularly where noise and disruption are expected.
- Communication – Mr. Kent will provide an update in September.

Mr. Kent encouraged any resident with a concern to contact him and he agreed to keep residents and the Parish Council updated.

- 2018/86 To discuss and agree a response to SDC's Sport and Recreation Survey.**
The clerk had prepared a draft response, discussed by Councillors. With a couple of minor alterations it was agreed this be submitted to SDC.
- 2018/87 To receive a report from the Finance Committee following their review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control.**
The Finance Committee had reviewed the system of internal control and agreed it covered the requirements of the Financial Regulations.
The clerk will aim to alter the timing of bank statements so that phone calls for updates are no longer required.
The data presented to Councillors will be altered slightly to provide information more clearly.
The clerk will look at examples of Grant Awarding Policies from other Councils to draft a revised policy.
- 2018/88 To review the Financial Regulations with feedback from the Finance Committee.**
These were reviewed, accepted and signed by Cllr. Hamilton.
- 2018/89 To discuss and agree a response to SDC's proposed changes to car parking arrangements in the District.**
Councillors discussed at length the issue of introducing parking charges in Nailsworth and could not reach a consensus of opinion; opinion was very much divided.
Some Councillors felt:
1. Clarification was required as to why SDC are introducing the charges.
 2. Concern that it is a back door revenue-gaining exercise.
 3. Charging should be up to local Town Councils to set their own rates, within a framework.
 4. If it does become a locally-decided issue rather than at District level, Town Councils should budget for maintenance of car parks within their boundaries.
- These points will be submitted to SDC. The consultation is open to anyone to comment as an individual.
- 2018/90 To receive a report from the Website Working Party and agree any recommendations.**
The Website Working Party had a productive meeting where proposals for change were put forward. Google Analytics was useful in looking at devices people are using and pages they are visiting.
The Working Party agreed to source a quote for an update of Wordpress to the latest version, to alter the banner heading, to ensure the website is 'mobile friendly' and to remove some sections which are redundant and update other sections regularly using information from the Woodchester Word.
Councillors agreed these recommendations.
- 2018/91 To receive an update from the Highways and Rights of Way Committee.**
Councillor Warnes has now walked all footpaths within the Parish.
Nettles have been cut along the path behind the Old Priory and the path itself across the spring is reasonably dry, but is expected to become boggy again once the rain returns.
SDC have cut back the Old Churchyard.

Initials.....

Following Councillor's disappointment at the poor maintenance of the cycle path, the clerk contacted Sarah Macaulay-Lowe, Rights of Way Officer at GCC who walked the path and reported no issues.

Councillors agreed a response emphasising the risk of potential injury from hawthorn on the stretch between Birds Crossing and Station Road and the difficulty in people passing between Pauls Rise and the bridge. It is believed the path was originally two metres wide and is now considerably narrower.

Residents who raise this as an issue will be directed to the Rights of Way Officer.

A meeting had been held with representatives of the National Trust to consider the issue of parking in St. Mary's Hill in order to swim in Woodchester Park lakes, not permitted by the NT. They have since employed security staff to work at weekends. Notes from this meeting are attached.

2018/92 To receive an update from the Events Committee.

There was nothing to report.

2018/93 To receive comments from members of the public on items discussed at this meeting.

There were no comments from members of the public.

The meeting closed at 8.52pm.

Chair..... Date.....

Initials.....

Meeting held with representatives of the National Trust to Discuss Parking Issues in St. Mary's Hill

26th June, 2018

Although parking issues in St. Mary's Hill are believed not to be solely due to wild swimming at Woodchester Park lakes, the majority of additional vehicles parked in St. Mary's Hill and the Church car park appear to be there for that purpose.

Vehicles cause an obstruction and there are times when an emergency vehicle would not be able to gain access. When called out, the Police have been reluctant to be involved.

The National Trust are very aware of the issues as not only is there a parking issue, but also one of noise and litter. Despite it not being permitted to swim in the lakes, people do and there is therefore potentially a health and safety issue as the site is not staffed. It is also an area with no mobile phone signal.

The National Trust are therefore willing to work with the PC, the Church and St. Dominic's School to find a solution to the problem.

The NT have already:

- Altered their postcode on the website to direct visitors to the top car park.
- Put an article in the Stroud News and Journal stating that swimming is not permitted and drawing people's attention to the problems it causes.

The following actions were agreed:

- The NT will send an email to the PC to include their concerns about swimming in the lakes and the obstruction for emergency vehicles to the area, as well as issues of noise and litter and what they are already doing to deter swimmers.
- This contribution from the NT will then be included in an address from the PC to the Police and Diocese expressing a concern of threat to life from vehicles causing an obstruction.
- The PC will request that the Diocese ask tenants of the house on the corner of Cow Lane and St. Mary's Hill to park in the Church car park and that cones are then placed at the top of St. Mary's Hill with notices on the wall stating, 'No parking please - access required at all times for emergency vehicles'.
- The NT will ensure 'No Swimming' signs are put up by the lakes and it was suggested these signs should give reasons why i.e. no mobile phone reception, very deep water. This message will also be relayed through the NT website.
- The NT will erect a 'No Entry' sign at the bottom end of the Park.
- It is understood the Diocese plan to put a gate at the entrance to their car park to prevent its use outside of services.

It was also suggested:

- A sign be placed on the corner of Park Lane for those who are genuinely lost, giving directions to the top gate. If necessary local residents will fund this.
- A personal sign be erected by residents stating that this is their only access for emergency vehicles.
- The National Trust are looking into the possibility of brown signs to ensure people are directed to the top car park, but these are based on the number of visitors and there is also a cost factor.

Initials.....