

Woodchester Parish Council

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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 21st May, 2019 in the Village Hall, North Woodchester at 7pm

Present

Councillor Hamilton (Chair)

Councillors Baldauf, Baynham-Honri, Dunbar, Lead

Mr. Tony Cooper, co-owner of Rooksmoor Mills

11 members of the public

Clerk, Ann Bijkerk

Welcome

Cllr. Hamilton welcomed all those present to the meeting.

Approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 10th May, 2018

Cllr. Lead proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record of the business transacted, seconded by Cllr. Baldauf. The minutes were signed as a true record by Cllr. Hamilton.

Receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Warnes and McNealey, County Councillor Steve Robinson, Neighbourhood Warden Chris James, Chair of the Woodchester Mansion Trust Rhiannon Wigzell and Jenny Bailey representing the Priory Church.

Presentation on Rooksmoor Mills Development by Tony Cooper

Tony Cooper was welcomed to the meeting to give an update on the development.

Although two months later than originally planned, demolition has begun on site. The next stage will involve the replacement of culverts with pre-cast concrete sections. Parts of the culverts are in a poor state, with one section currently propped.

Piling for Block F is due to begin on the 26th July. Unfortunately because of the water-logged nature of the land close to the river, piling cannot be augured, but will need to be driven. This will unfortunately cause some inconvenience to local residents.

Block F is scheduled to be complete by February 2020.

Construction of Block B will commence in December 2019.

Final completion is expected in August 2021.

A concern was raised over the length of time traffic lights will be required on the A46.

Mr. Cooper gave clarification. The traffic lights currently in place are due to the installation of a gas mains and should be removed in a few days.

Traffic lights will be required during the construction of Block B as the eastern wall is very close to the road. The developers are mindful of the inconvenience this causes, but lights may be in place for between four and five months. Mr. Cooper will liaise with the clerk nearer the time. The clerk will contact Gloucestershire Highways to ask if any measures can be taken to deter drivers from using Southfield Road, Selsley Road and Rooksmoor Hill as a cut-through during this time.

Initials.....

A resident asked whether the hours of work could be reduced to begin later in the morning and questioned whether this is conditioned as part of planning permission. Mr. Cooper agreed to speak with the contractor and check the conditions of the planning application.

It was suggested an information board be erected adjacent to the 'cycle path' to give an impression of the development at completion. Mr. Cooper confirmed that in time this will be in place.

Concern was raised over the asbestos roof and dust from the site. Mr. Cooper confirmed that the roofing had been removed as a whole and that some dust was inevitable in building demolition. Mr. Cooper was asked whether the dust could be dampened and confirmed that most of the demolition work was now over. A crushing machine will be in operation at the northern end of the site to provide hard core to then be reused on site.

The clerk will provide a list of the questions for Mr. Cooper arising from the meeting to then be discussed with the contractor.

Presentation of the Village Annual Report

Cllr. Hamilton began by summarising the Parish Council report, outlining the key issues coming to the attention of the Parish Council over the past year. A copy of the full report will be made available on the village website.

With reference to the increase in housing need for the District, Cllr. Hamilton confirmed that the 54 units planned for the Rooksmoor development would be included in that quota.

Planning permission does not always lead to properties being built and SDC must take this into consideration when reaching their quota.

Cllr. Hamilton reported that a reduced budget for Gloucestershire Highways has led to the Parish Council making the decision to take on more village maintenance. The village precept increased this year, partly to allow a greater maintenance budget, giving the Parish council more control over priority work.

Wild swimming continues to be an issue for residents at the southern end of the village, particularly with the number of vehicles parking on St. Mary's Hill and Convent Lane. The Parish Council are working with the National Trust and Gloucestershire Highways and hopefully this liaison will see the situation gradually improving.

Cllr. Hamilton explained issues of maintenance relating to the Pond off Church Lane. Ownership of the pond and its surroundings is unknown, although residents of Lawns Park are given a right of access in their deeds. Earlier in the year a section of wall collapsed; Councillors made the decision to arrange for repair at Parish Council expense. In time, other maintenance issues will arise.

Owners of neighbouring properties have carried out some work to reduce ivy growth and repair the gate. English Heritage are not interested in taking on ownership and responsibility. The Parish Council could seek ownership, but this may incur significant costs.

Following a recent meeting with Helen Richards, representative from the Gloucestershire Rural Communities Council (GRCC), Helen agreed to try to arrange an ecological survey of the pond and surroundings and to find out who has ultimate responsibility for a piece of land for which ownership is unknown.

Residents present were asked for their feedback. It was suggested that Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust might show an interest in the pond as a habitat. It was agreed that all residents of Lawns Park should be

Initials.....

consulted and in turn make a decision on the future of the pond. In the past, residents have carried out regular annual maintenance, but this has lapsed in recent years.

It was agreed that more work should be done to look at funding options through grants.

Once the Parish Council have a response from the GRCC they will then agree a way forward.

Residents were asked to raise any other issues.

Clarification was sought on the situation regarding the closure of Water Lane as the 'Road Closed' sign had not been replaced. The Parish Council were unaware of any imminent plan to resurface the road to enable the road to be re-opened. The clerk will contact Gloucestershire Highways to ask that the sign is replaced.

A resident of Bear Hill was concerned that walking down the road to the A46 carries risk as drivers do not always slow down to an appropriate speed. No response was given directly by the Parish Council, but the question led into a presentation by Iain Dunbar on the work of the Stroud District Road Safety Partnership which includes work to identify 'vulnerable road user sites'.

Presentation – Road Safety in the Village

A number of issues regarding road safety have been of concern to residents for a number of years. The cost to a Parish Council to apply for any change relating to a reduction in speed limit, traffic calming measures etc. must be done through a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) at a cost of at least £15,000. For a small parish such as Woodchester, this is not a feasible option.

In October 2018, in order to address some of the issues facing local parishes, the Stroud District Road Safety Group (SDRSG) was set up. All 52 parishes in the Stroud District are invited and over half of those are actively engaged. The group now has a website www.strouddistrictroadsafety.com.

The aim of the group is to improve road safety by modifying driver behaviour. They are planning to achieve this through four main initiatives:

1. To identify sites where Parish and Town Councils feel the speed limits are inappropriate. To date 36 sites have been identified. Woodchester Parish Council have proposed that roads through the village be reduced to 20mph and the A46 from Rodborough through the village be reduced to 30mph. Residents will be consulted on this as part of the TRO application.
2. To apply for a multi-site TRO. The cost of this will be split between those parishes asking for a speed reduction. Gloucestershire Highways have agreed to match-fund.
3. To purchase two mobile VAS systems for use by all participating councils. Woodchester Parish Council have already agreed to become associate members at a cost of £250 to enable the village to make use of these cameras.
The purpose of these is two-fold. They will alert drivers who are exceeding the speed limit. Past data has shown these cameras to result in a 27% reduction in the number of people exceeding the limit. Secondly, data will be gathered for use as evidence for the TRO application.
4. The group are looking to identify a number of 'vulnerable road user sites'. Upper Selsley Road has been identified and the lower section of Bear Hill is another to consider. The group will then discuss what might be done, possibly through the use of road signs to make drivers more aware of pedestrians sharing the road space.

In the future, the group would like to do more work in schools and also work with local Police, where resources allow, to enforce speed limits.

Cllr. Dunbar was thanked for his part in the work of the SDRSG and for presenting their aims and progress to date.

Initials.....

Thanks and close

Cllr. Hamilton thanked everyone for attending and for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

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

Initials.....