

Woodchester Parish Council

Clerk: Sylvia May

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Minutes of the Remote Meeting of Woodchester Parish Council held on 4th March, 2021 at 7pm.

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

In attendance: County Councillor Steve Robinson, the clerk and one member of the public.

2021/19 To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies from Cllr Lead

2021/20 To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

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

2021/21 To receive questions from members of the public/those attending in an official capacity.

The member of the public asked about parking in South Woodchester. He wondered how the Parish Council could help with the ongoing problem. Had the Parish Council considered an approach to the public work loans board to purchase land (although he agreed that suitable land was a difficulty). He also asked whether the Parish Council were affiliated to any local environmental organisations. The Chairman responded that the questions raised would be addressed later in the meeting.

2021/22 To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 7th January, 2021.

It was agreed these were a true record. It was agreed they would be signed by Cllr Hamilton as a convenient time before the next meeting.

2021/23 To receive the County Councillors report.

Cllr Robinson reported that all signage for Frogmarsh is now in place.

Cllr Robinson reported that Gloucestershire County Council have agreed a 1.9% increase in Council Tax and a 2.76% levy for adult social care. This means they have £468 million budget of which around two thirds is raised locally.

Cllr Robinson expressed regret that the budget each councillor previously had for local highways projects had been cut from £25,000 last year to £10,000 to cover the five Parishes he represents. He also stated that the 'growing communities fund' was not available this year. This had been used in the past to support organisations like schools, playgroup and guides.

Cllr Robinson confirmed that Selsley Road is due to be resurfaced next financial year and that all original road markings will be reinstated.

Cllr Robinson confirmed that he had talked to the Rights of Way Officer at Gloucestershire Highways about the bridge at Birds Crossing and that the wood was currently being tanalised with the repair set to start end of March or early April.

Cllr Robinson also reported that Gidynap Bridge on the 'cycle track' is to be replaced and the track will be widened behind 'Q-park' also that the dip crossing the driveway to the Priory will be resurfaced.

Cllr Robinson also reported that he has highlighted with Paul Helbrow that the Parish Council would like to see St Mary's Hill and Church road, particularly up from Southfield Road, resurfaced.

Cllr Robinson thanked the Parish Council for their support over the last four years and stated that he would be standing for re-election.

Cllr Baynham-Honri reported that the Clerk has sent a letter to Gloucestershire Highways regarding the inadequate new surface that has been used for repairs on the ramp down from the A46 at Frogmarsh in Woodchester. This section takes HGV'S into and out of Bottle Green. Cllr Robinson agreed to take this up with Paul Helbrow at their next meeting.

Clerk to forward relevant correspondence to Cllr Robinson.

Cllr McNealey asked Cllr Robinson if he had heard from Alan Bentley about the trees that have been marked in green on the 'Cycle Track'. A local resident had expressed concern about it. Cllr Robinson reported they were trees that were unsafe and were to be felled. Cllr McNealey reported that the Parish Council have still heard nothing further about the bus stop and crossing problems on the A46 at Rooksmoor. Cllr Robinson agreed to follow this up.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Robinson for his work over the last four years, especially as the Parish has not had a District councillor for much of that time.

Cllr Robinson left the meeting.

2021/24 To receive the Clerk's report.

This was received.

2021/25 To note the latest financial statements.

These were agreed as accurate.

2021/26 To approve expenditure and approve cheques as per annex.

These were approved. The Chairman proposed that the any community litter pickers should be reimbursed for bags they need to buy for their work. This was agreed. The Chairman also proposed that the Clerk should be paid for additional hours work completed. This was agreed.

2021/27 To note planning applications, decisions and appeals from SDC as per annex.

These were noted. Cllr McNealey queried S.20/1209/VAR 'to substitute approved plans with new plans'. The Chairman stated he recalled they were a series of minor variations e.g. to the façade, that had been addressed at the time. The clerk explained this was a reduced title as the list of variations was long.

Cllr McNealey to review the variations in the application.

2021/28 To approve an internal auditor.

Iain Selkirk was approved as the internal auditor for this year. His fee is £105.

2021/29 To discuss the Local Government Elections on 6th May and agree a way forward.

The Chairman confirmed that the elections are set to go ahead this year after being cancelled last year due to Covid-19. The Chairman expressed regret that Cllr Warnes and Cllr Baldauf had decided to step down. He thanked them both for their work during their terms of office. Other Councillors confirmed they were happy to stand again.

The Chairman asked all Councillors to give some thought to who the Council could approach to stand to fill the vacancies. Cllr Dunbar has written an advert and the Editor has agreed to put a short piece in the next issue of the Woodchester Word raising the issue and asking residents to step forward. Cllr Dunbar stated he has been approached by one resident who might be interested. Councillors agreed that for balance it would be ideal if a candidate came from the Rooksmoor area.

The Clerk reported that the notice of the election was due to go out on 22nd March. The final deadline for nominations is the 8th April, however due to the additional pressures of Covid-19 SDC have request that Parish Council nominations are submitted by 26th March. They have requested that all nominations are submitted by one individual if possible (the Clerk can do this) and by appointment. There is little time to recruit new candidates before 26th March deadline. However, it was pointed out that candidates can be co-opted at a later stage.

The Clerk stated that the new Parish Council takes office on 10th May and that the Annual Meeting is currently scheduled for the 13th. Current legislation allows for remote meetings only until 7th May and the Village hall is unable to open until 17th May.

Clerk to contact Woodchester School about the possibility of the Parish Council meeting there for their annual meeting on 13th May if current legislation isn't extended.

The Chairman will contact the Village Hall Committee to establish the rules there.

2021/30

To discuss and agree the feasibility of the 2021 Annual Parish Meeting (scheduled for Thursday 13th May) and to discuss and agree key issues to include in the Parish Council report if applicable.

The Clerk reported that the LGA 1972 requires that there is an Annual Parish Meeting between 1st March and 1st June, it can be called by the electorate, although most usually its called by the Chairman of the Parish Council. SLCC website says 'there is no effective sanction should the Parish Council not set a date and time for this to occur'. Under current legislation the PC could still have a virtual Parish Meeting before 7th May, however after that date, it would need to be face to face. The Clerk reported that discussions with other Clerks indicate that some do not plan to have a Parish Meeting this year and some have postponed until the end of May hoping the legislation will change and it can be conducted virtually. Some Parish Councils have agreed to hold a short Annual Parish Meeting (e.g. just with a Chairman's report) to fulfil the statutory requirement, but then to hold a 'village forum' or similar at a later date once the legislation is clarified and restrictions around COVID-19 eased.

It was agreed that the Parish Council will call a brief Annual Parish Meeting on 13th May after the Annual Meeting (subject to the difficulties of venue stated above). This would be with a view to running a village forum (or similar) later in the year. Date to be confirmed. In view of the reduced nature of the Parish Meeting this year, issues to include in any Parish Council report where not discussed.

2021/31

To receive a report from the Highways and Rights of Way Committee to include a report regarding the Five Valleys Litter Task Force.

Cllr Warnes restated the issues with the bridge at Birds Crossing pointing out that cycles and cars travel at speed down Southfield Road.

Clerk to contact Gloucestershire Highways to see if the 'pedestrian in the road' signs already requested could be provided.

A resident had commented about the state of the path around Boundary Court. Cllr Warnes has contacted the National Trust, but cattle have now been moved away from the path.

Cllr Warnes reported that the Gloucestershire Stone Styles Project has become 'historical' and so she doesn't expect the Council to hear much more about that.

Cllr Warnes reported that a resident was concerned about the catches on the gates provided by Severn Trent. She has met with David Warner and Jack Galloway on site, they have asked for some work to be done on the catches. Some of the fences may be removed reducing the problem.

Cllr Warnes reported that generally footpaths are improving.

Cllr Dunbar reported that the Rooksmoor developers had been approached about the drainage from the Mountain Biking Track, but that they had denied doing any work that could have affected it.

Cllr Dunbar reported that he has had a discussion with Paul Helbrow about the possibility of Woodchester getting 'village gateways'. He understood that Gloucestershire Highways are closely involved in the installation of any 'village gateways' including inspections of the proposed site and that they would usually use a specified company to make the gates. The cost of three 'village gateways' to Woodchester Parish would be around £4500 plus

installation. Councillors agreed that this was too expensive and that the project shouldn't go ahead at his time.

Cllr McNealey reported that a group called the 'Five Valleys Wombles' had started around Christmas, based on Facebook and that the members were collecting litter in the locality. A group of the 'Wombles' has set up the 'Five Valleys Litter Task Force' which has three main strands to its activities: Infrastructure, Legislation and Enforcement. Cllr McNealey expects a formal approach by the task force via Rodborough Parish Council in due course and hopes Woodchester Parish Council will endorse the work they do. Cllr McNealey is willing to represent Woodchester Parish on the Action group if required.

The Chairman raised a recent approach by Brockworth Parish seeking to set up a meeting of Parish Councils which are alongside the A46 to discuss the impact of development in the area on the road system. Cllr Dunbar agreed that he would attend the first meeting and report back to the Parish Council.

The Chairman also reported that a local resident had expressed concern about parking near road junctions. The Parish Council now has a flyer highlighting the relevant section of the highway code. Interested residents should contact the Clerk.

2021/32 To discuss National Trust Stroud Landscape Project and agree a way forward

The National Trust has circulated a report about the Stroud Landscape Project; a partnership with private landowners, which aims to reduce fragmentation of habitats and, in the first phase, to connect Woodchester Park with the Commons. Cllr McNealey has approached David Armstrong who has agreed to offer residents of Woodchester a guided walk of Boundary Court, outlining their plans (which include a plan to reseed Boundary Court with wild flowers). This is to occur once COVID-19 restrictions allow.

2021/33 To discuss the suggested development of a Parish Logo and agree a way forward.

Cllr Dunbar has designed a possible Parish Logo which was circulated to Councillors. Cllr Dunbar however suggested the discussion should be deferred until the new Council are in place so new Councillors can be involved in the process. This was agreed.

2021/34 To receive an update from the Events Committee

There have been no events organised by the Events Committee this year due to COVID-19, however a suggestion has been made for a Parish Picnic in September. Cllr Dunbar stated that the Made in Woodchester craft group plan a summer craft fair possibly at the end of July. Both events are at an early stage and the Parish Council will be kept informed.

2021/35 To receive comments from members of the public on items discussed at this meeting.

The member of the public present thanked the Councillors for the work they do. He commented that in his view, the National Trust Project is of great significant to the local area and should be a priority.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

Chairman Date