

Woodchester Parish Council

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Minutes of the Meeting of Woodchester Parish Council held on 7th March, 2019 in the Village Hall at
7pm

Present: Cllrs. Hamilton, Baldauf, Dunbar, McNealey and Warnes

In attendance: Rooksmoor Mills owners Mr. Tony Cooper and Mr. Alan Tyndall, County Councillor Steve Robinson, the clerk and three members of the public.

2019/23 To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Lead and Baynham-Honri and District Councillor Phil McAsey.

2019/24 To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

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

2019/25 To receive questions from members of the public and those attending in an official capacity.

Ecotricity based at Q Park have carried out some work to install cabling across the 'cycle path' at Frogmarsh. Plastic pipe has been left on site by contractors. The clerk will follow this up.

Concern was raised over the state of two trees on the junction between Selsley Road and the cycle path. The clerk confirmed that these dead trees had been raised with Gloucestershire Highways (GH) as a potential issue last year and that the trees were inspected by Gloucestershire County Council at that time.

2019/26 To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of 10th January, 2019.

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

2019/27 To receive an update on the Rooksmoor development and to receive questions from members of the public.

Mr. Cooper and Mr. Tyndall were welcomed to the meeting to provide an update on a schedule for development at Rooksmoor Mills.

The owners have entered into a Design and Build contract with a Bristol-based company Coln Residential who will be responsible for works on site. The owners retain ownership and will continue to have input into the design and an overview of development.

Completion of Blocks A, B, C and F is expected to take two and a half years and therefore be complete by July 2021.

Phase One has now been implemented. This has involved clearing the site of trees and shrubs. Following concern raised by a resident about the potential for nesting owls in the coming months, Mr. Cooper confirmed that all tree work is now complete. The site will be replanted to an agreed landscaping scheme. Although surveys indicate that bats are only visitors to the site rather than residents, bat boxes and an otter holt will be installed on site.

Demolition will commence on site once relevant planning conditions have been discharged. It is hoped that work to the culverts will now take place in March and

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piling to Block F will be scheduled for April, but these timescales are dependent on SDC's Planning Department.

The culverts are in a poor condition and several solutions have been examined. It is now expected they will be replaced with pre-fabricated concrete sections. Piling will be augured rather than driven where possible, but near to water there is a necessity for piles to be driven and therefore noise will be experienced during this time.

Mr. Cooper reported the possible upgrading of Block B (that fronting the pond) to see it faced in stone, rather than red brick. Similarly some of the walls inside the quadrangle may be altered to be faced in stone.

The owners are hoping to alter one of the conditions which specified the building of Block C must coincide with the building of Blocks F and B. The aim of the condition was to ensure that Block C would be developed and the existing building wouldn't be left undeveloped. However from a Health and Safety perspective, the owners reported this would make it very difficult to occupy Block C whilst building work was still taking place to the south. The owners have applied to remove this condition to allow a flow of development from south to north, developing the cottage/gate house and adjacent block after Blocks F and B are complete. This would also enable footpath access to the cycle path to be re-opened sooner.

There is also the possibility in the future to apply to substitute land at the north of the site, agreed for commercial use, with a small number of houses, some of which would be affordable.

Should a large profit be made on the agreed 54 units, a sum of money will be required by Stroud District Council (SDC) for affordable housing.

Councillors asked that the impact on the cycle path be kept to a minimum. The owners gave the reassurance that there should be no impact on the cycle path and that Heras fencing would be installed approximately 500mm from the track along the length of the boundary before development commences. Councillors raised concern that the site is currently open and asked that fencing be installed as a matter of priority to prevent children using the Bike Trails and other users of the 'cycle path' from entering the site.

Councillors felt it would be useful to incorporate signage on the fencing along the cycle path to inform passers-by. They suggested a brief history of the site and an image of the new development. It was expected that publicity boards would be erected.

When asked whether traffic lights would be required on the A46, Mr. Cooper confirmed that traffic lights would be in place during the construction of Block C, because it is so close to the road.

The County Councillor raised the concern that re-surfacing of the road from Lightpill through to Woodchester would be likely to take place as slippage is currently being monitored at Lightpill and that this shouldn't take place only for the road to be dug up shortly afterwards for utilities to the Rooksmoor site. Mr. Cooper confirmed that all

utilities are already on site and that any repositioning of cables/pipes would take place within the site.

It was agreed that communication take place between Mr. Cooper and Cllr. Dunbar in terms of any updates in timescales or queries/concerns from residents.

Mr. Cooper, Mr. Tyndall and one member of the public left the meeting.

2019/28

To receive County and District Councillor reports.

A report had been received from County Councillor Steve Robinson (attached), circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.

Funding is available for road improvements and following the meeting in January the Parish Council gave Cllr. Robinson a list of priorities. Cllr. Robinson asked whether, with the prospect of a 20mph speed limit for the village through the work of the Stroud District Road Safety Group (SDRSG), repainting 30mph markings on Selsley road was still a priority. Councillors agreed that the village is looking at a time scale of at least two years before the implementation of 20mph. Therefore they agreed that this was still a priority for spending by the County Councillor.

Concern was raised over the condition of the surface of the A46 from Woodchester Station to Inchbrook. Councillors agreed a letter be drafted to the relevant cabinet member, Cllr. Vernon Smith, outlining their concerns.

Councillors requested they be kept up to date with any information the County Councillor might receive on funding for proposed improvements to the 'cycle path' as they had received mixed messages. Cllr. Robinson confirmed he would try to provide clarity.

Councillor Robinson left the meeting.

2019/29

To receive the clerk's report.

This was received.

A second defibrillator for the telephone box in South Woodchester may be installed, funded by residents.

2019/30

To note the latest financial statements.

These were noted.

2019/31

To approve expenditure and approve cheques as per annex.

This was approved and cheques signed at the end of the meeting.

2019/32

To receive an update on issues with internet banking and agree a course of action.

Following difficulties with internet banking in terms of access and the perceived inconvenience for Councillors in registering and authorising payments, Councillors agreed that payments continue to be made by cheque and access for internet banking for the clerk be restricted to 'view only'. A Mandate Variation request was signed at the end of the meeting.

2019/33

To approve an internal auditor.

Councillors agreed to appoint Mr. Selkirk as internal auditor for 2018/19.

2019/34

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

These were noted.

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2019/35

To discuss and agree priorities for snow ploughing in the village.

Following snow in February, the village Snow Plough Operator had cleared Selsley Road and several other roads in the village. Concern had been raised by a couple of residents who asked why Convent Lane had not been cleared.

A conversation with the Snow Plough Operator on the feasibility of clearing various roads within the village raised some issues of parked cars and gradient which can prevent ploughing. Ploughing during snowfall is not worthwhile as snow simply builds up again following ploughing. In heavy snow, the width of road is also an issue as the ploughed snow needs sufficient room on the side of the road.

Councillors agreed that it is not possible to provide the Snow Plough Operator with a list of roads to be cleared as it is dependent on many variables.

The clerk will contact Gloucestershire Highways to confirm whether or not there is a list of priorities for road clearance.

The issue will be discussed again at the Full Council meeting in November.

2019/36

To receive an update on ownership and responsibility for the pond off Church Lane and agree a course of action.

In January, a portion of the wall adjacent to the pond in Church Lane collapsed. Inquiries were made to establish ownership of this piece of land. Land Registry have no record of ownership and it's believed that no-one is responsible. On this occasion the wall was repaired at Parish Council expense. As a pond on this site is believed to date back to Roman times, a meeting was held with a representative from Historic England to discuss the possibility of them taking responsibility for the site or the implications of the Parish Council doing so. As the land was not within their boundary which includes the site of the Orpheus Pavement and beyond, it is possible the Parish Council could seek ownership of the pond and surroundings, which would in turn incur any costs of maintenance. It would therefore need to be agreed that it is in the interests of the Parish.

Councillors agreed the issue be raised at the Annual Parish Meeting in May to seek the support of residents. In the meantime Cllr. Hamilton agreed to seek advice from Historic England on the legal position.

2019/37

To receive a report on the meeting with Parish and Town Councils held at Ebley Mill on the 30th January.

Cllr. Hamilton summarised the key points from the meeting at which Kathy O'Leary, the new CE introduced herself.

The Budget – Future funding has uncertainties. Revenue from Council Tax is reasonably certain, but funding from retained business rates is likely to fall and is partially dependant on the outcome of Brexit. Funding from the New Homes Bonus has been in decline since 2016/17 and is likely to continue to fall, although this has not been confirmed. This uncertainty makes forecasting difficult. Medium-term projections indicate a possible funding deficit of almost two million pounds. SDC are in a fortunate position of holding healthy reserves, but are looking for ways to increase funding and 'opportunities to make their money work'.

Local Plan – This is currently under review, a process which must be done every five years. The Plan will be rolled forward to cover 2020-2040. There is a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which will need to be reflected in SDC's Local Plan. A second challenge has come about from a change in the method used to calculate housing need, which is no longer set locally. The current Local Plan growth rate is 456 units per annum in the Stroud District. Under the new method for calculation, this

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will rise by 40% to 638 units per annum, or the need for 12,800 properties over the twenty year period. More strategic sites will be required to enable this target to be met.

Monitoring Officer- Clarification was provided on the role of the Monitoring Officer, particularly in dealing with the misconduct of Councillors and the process involved in seeking a resolution when complaints are made.

The clerk had received information on a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge being undertaken by SDC. Councillors discussed communication between the Parish Council and SDC and agreed there had been some improvements e.g. monthly newsletter, but that improvement would be welcome in liaison with the Planning Department. Councillors agreed they would like to see the commitments of the 2013 document, 'Working Together in the Stroud District', put together with the help of the GAPTC, adhered to where resources allow. Cllr. Hamilton agreed to draft a response for circulation.

2019/38 To agree the format for the 2019 Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 23rd May and to discuss and agree key issues to include in the Parish Council report.

Councillors discussed issues for inclusion in the Parish Council report which Councillor Hamilton will draft for circulation. It was agreed Cllr. Dunbar give an update on the work of the SDRSG and the views of residents be sought on the land surrounding the pond on Church Lane.

2019/39 To receive a report from the Highways and Rights of Way Committee to include a report from the Stroud District Road Safety Group.

Cllr. Warnes reported the hedge having been cut between Bird's Crossing and Station Road. This has revealed that the edges of the track now need clearing as vegetation and soil have encroached onto the path. The clerk will find out a timescale for the Leyhill Team to do this.

The Litter Pick on the 24th March will be restricted by the closure of Selsley Road. Cllr. McNealey agreed to clear the top of the hill.

Cllr. Dunbar gave an update from the last meeting of the SDRSG which saw representation from many local parishes. The group are working on three priorities:

1. To implement 'appropriate' speed limits in 19 areas already identified by Parish and Town Councils as having inappropriate speed limits. The next step in this process is to put together evidence to apply for a multi-site TRO, which GH have agreed will be match-funded. This process will be lengthy, likely a couple of years, but it's hoped will result in more appropriate speed limits in areas identified as being problematic.
2. To identify vulnerable road user areas.
3. A VAS (vehicle-activated sign) campaign. The group are trying to acquire two mobile VAS, which have the capacity to collect data. These would be loaned to Councils within the group. Legislation limits the amount of time these cameras can inform drivers of their speed to two weeks at a time. Data is however collected during the time the sign is not displaying to drivers. Therefore it is possible to use this data to indicate the impact the sign has on speed. It is hoped that GH will partially fund two machines, leaving the SDRSG needing to find £3,500. Councillors agreed that sharing a portion of this cost with the other parishes of the group would have the support of Woodchester Parish Council.

2019/40

To receive an update from the Events Committee.

A 'Meet Your Neighbours' event is taking place on the 16th March.

The Village Show will take place on the 14th September.

Open Gardens will not take place this year due to several owners having other garden commitments.

2019/41

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 9.15pm.

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

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County Councillor's Report for Woodchester Parish Council March 2019

Highways Budget

The budget allocated to each County Councillor has now been agreed at £25,000 for the coming year, £15,000 of which must be used for Capital Projects (tarmac).

Council Tax for 2019/20

Council Tax will rise by 2.99% plus 2% for Adult Social Care. (This is currently the last year when councils are allowed to ask for extra money for Social Care)

Additions to the Budget

Additions to the budget put forward by the Labour and Liberal Democrats which were agreed by Full Council:-

- a) £10k per district for Youth Work administered by GCC
- b) £50k per year for 2 years for 'Holiday Hunger'
- c) £30k for mapping cycle ways in Gloucestershire, both on and off road
- d) Relaunch of the Travel Card for apprentices and Care Leavers
- e) £50k for suicide prevention training
- f) £50k for STI testing

Parking Permits

Although it does not affect residents in this parish, the administration is increasing the charge for parking permits by 20%.

Fire & Rescue Service

Cuts of £160,000 are proposed. The administration withdrew the proposed cut to the service.

Gloucestershire Police & Crime Commissioner

As a member of the Police & Crime Panel I attended a meeting with the PCC regarding his proposed budget for 2019/20. National government is allowing each PCC to raise its share of council tax by £24 on Band D. This will bring in an extra £4m to be spent on frontline services.

Grow our Community Fund

I am pleased to say that in the last month I have been able to help St Dominic's with a grant of £1,500 towards the garden project there. This brings the total of grants awarded to Woodchester voluntary groups to £5,000.

Highways Local Budget 2019/20

Am I right in thinking that Woodchester Parish Council would like the road markings on Selsley Hill to be refreshed?

Are there any other paths etc. which need to be re-tarmacked?

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