



WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

Dave Kent
Clerk to the Council

Clive Hooper
Deputy Clerk

Parish Office
West Dean Centre
High Street
Bream
Glos.
GL15 6JW

Tel. Parish Office: 01594 564484 (9.00am – 1.00pm)
Email: admin@westdeanpc.org.uk
Web site: www.westdeanpc.org.uk

COUNCIL MINUTES

PUBLIC FORUM

There was no Public Forum

Present:

WDPC COUNCILLORS: B Freshwater (BF), A Grant (AG), S Crick (SC), A Moore (AM), M Costley (MC), P Dunford (PD), B Evans (BE), S Yeates (SY), A Bruce (AB), B Gayler and J Dale (JD). D Kent (Clerk) and C Hooper (Deputy Clerk) were in attendance
R Boyles (GCC and FODDC Councillor) and P Hiatt (FODDC Councillor)

COUNCIL FORMAL BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies were received from: Parish Councillors D Oliver, C Smith, S Francis and J Richmond (FODDC) and R Boyles (GCC and FODDC Councillor) and P Hiatt (FODDC Councillor)

1.2 Declarations of Interest

None received

1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – The minutes of the meeting on 27th May 2020 were accepted as a true record to be signed by the Chair as soon as is feasible.

1.4 Meeting Protocols

There was concern that remote access meetings restricted participation by the public and was therefore unsatisfactory.

It was agreed that the next Council meeting would be held using the same protocols, but the rules permitting public participation would be explained in press announcements and on the Council web site, and at the next meeting consideration would be given to lifting some of the restrictions, subject to any national guidance available at the time

1.5 Chair's Announcement (taken out of sequence)

The Chair reported that the Council web site had been gradually improved, but more improvement was required, particularly in respect of more comprehensive and accessible meeting information. There would be a regular review of the web site by appointed councillors to identify incorrect, outdated or difficult-to-access items.

2. Items for discussion and decision

2.1 Corona Virus Emergency

A brief report on community and council action was presented by SC.

Referrals for support were diminishing, reflecting the reduction in cases, but systems for dealing with the situation would be kept in place in case of a second wave of the virus.

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The Forest Voluntary Action Forum scheme for remote payment facilities was noted, but no action was considered necessary in the short term.

DK had printed 200 copies of instructions for the production of PPE equipment, and S Freeman and E Highfield were commended on their work in producing this equipment.

2.2 Finance & Staffing

i) DK reported on progress in implementing the new EDGE Financial Management System. All transactions for 2019-20 and for the first 2 months of the 2020-21 financial had been entered to the system, so that the 2019-20 financial return, along with the Internal Auditor's report, would now be submitted for External Audit.

Council was now able to resume monthly financial inspections and bank reconciliations, and new reports could be developed.

It was thought to be important that Councillors could view financial reports during council meetings, and the Clerk would investigate means whereby reports could be presented electronically by Zoom or similar technology at subsequent virtual meetings.

Action 24/20 01 Clerk

The matter of acknowledging community volunteers' work in respect of the Covid 19 emergency was discussed at this point. Matters considered included sending letters/cards to volunteers and holding a buffet occasion after the emergency was over. The matter to be considered at the next Council meeting.

Subject for next Council meeting

ii) The minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee of 11th June 2020 were accepted, except that the declaration of interests should show that JD's declaration was in respect of association with Yorkley Community Centre, not Pillowell Village Hall, as had been wrongly published.

iii) The payment schedule for June 2020 as presented was approved.

iv) AM and BF were appointed as electronic signatories for May payments.

v) In view of the absence of financial reporting documents over the previous few months while the new Financial Management was being introduced, it was agreed that the June Financial Inspection would include an overview of the system as well as a bank reconciliation, and would therefore take longer than usual. **AG and BF to conduct**

vi) Summer 2020 grant awards.

It was agreed that the Grant Awarding Policy would be revised to remove and confusion about eligibility criteria.

It was agreed that the underspend of £4,650 from financial year 2019-20 would be carried forward to the current year.

The grant recommendations of the Finance and Staffing Committee were approved en bloc.

The sum of these awards was above the 50% of the annual budget allocated for each twice-yearly grant awarding session of Council, leaving a budget of £15,041 for the second tranche. This overspend was approved.

vii) It was agreed that a rolling budget of £4,500 per year over the next three years would be provided for the maintenance and replacement of existing fencing and the enclosure of unfenced areas.

Action: The Deputy Clerk to work with local Councillors to develop this 3 year plan.

viii) It was agreed that as only one tender had been received for the refurbishment of the 14 ex-BT telephone kiosks, then that tender, for £6,270.00, would be accepted.

It was agreed that the kiosks should retain their traditional red colour. It was noted that a Berry Hill kiosk had been painted blue. While Council disapproved of this colour for the kiosks, it was decided that no action should be taken in this case except to remind community groups that the Council should be consulted over future works relating to the appearance of council property.

Action: The Clerk would write an appropriate letter to the Berry Hill community group

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ix) It was agreed that an in-house GAPTC Course 'Being a Better Councillor' would be arranged at a local venue when it is legal and safe to do so. Any surplus places might be offered to other local councils.

Action: Clerk

x) It was agreed that staff appraisals would be postponed until the end of the current emergency restrictions

xi) It was agreed that a defibrillator would be provided to be installed at the Berry Hill kiosk under Council's agreed terms, with the Parish Council and Community contributing equally.

xii) It was agreed that an Equal Opportunities Policy would be developed

Action: Clerk/Deputy Clerk

2.3 Climate Emergency

The Village Veg Group had provided a written report, and a proposal for the development of a community orchard at the Rudge, Yorkley had been prepared and was to be circulated by the Clerk

Clerk to circulate

2.4 Public Safety Issue, Clements End

The Clerk provided a brief report.

2.5 Planning Enforcement

The lack of progress with planning enforcement progress in respect of the Yorkley Court Farm development was noted with great frustration. Parish and community complaints about the enforcement of planning conditions and the unavailability of public footpaths on the site due to poor maintenance and the creation of obstacles had been recorded.

It was also noted that the relevant areas at FODDC were understaffed, and that therefore additional resources should be provided by FODDC management for these areas.

It was agreed that the Clerk would produce draft letters to:

- i) Head of Paid Service, FODDC, in respect of understaffing of Planning Enforcement
- ii) Planning Enforcement officers in respect of poor communication with the Parish Council on enforcement issues.
- iii) County Councillor Richard Boyles in respect of lack of required resources in the Public Rights of Way office in the Highways Department
- iv) Public Rights of Way officer Jeff Wheeler in respect of current action planned to make all public rights of way on the site available to the public.

These letters would be restrained in their content, but the submission of a formal complaint about the handling of all these issues would be reserved if answers were not forthcoming or unsatisfactory.

Action: Clerk

2.6 Yorkley Court Farm S106 Moneys

There had been no recent response from the relevant area of the District Council to repeated requests for information on the allocation of S106 funds deriving from the Yorkley Court Farm Development for community projects. This matter had been dragging on for 5 years, and urgent and immediate action would be demanded.

It was noted that the developer had proposed a Community Interest Company (CIC) to handle and allocate the funds. This had been rejected by the Parish Council, and the disbursement of the funds would be managed by the developer and money could be diverted from the funds to provide payments and expenses to CIC directors.

The Chair had proposed a Parish Council management structure based on a model designed for Slimbridge Parish Council which would permit funds to be allocated in their entity to community

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projects. There had been no response from the District Council to this proposal, or to any of the other communications on the subject from the Parish Council.

It was noted that the delays were despite the intervention of District Councillors A Moore and P Hiett, who were commended for their work.

Action:

i) the Clerk to write to Head of Paid Service, Mr P Williams, registering a complaint about the lack of a decision and of poor communication on this issue which had been unresolved for 5 years, and to insist upon immediate action .

ii) A committee of Pillowell ward Councillors (BF, PD and JD), with AG, the Clerk, and District Councillor P Hiatt to form a committee to take this matter forward.

2.7 Stowe Quarry, Newland Parish

The Parish Council reaffirmed its objections to the proposed Stowe Hill Quarry development in support of Newland Parish Council. BE thanked Council for their support.

3. Items to Report

3.1 Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

A brief report was received.

3.2 Planning

The monthly report on Parish observations on planning applications was not presented, and would be included in a report at the following meeting.

3.3 Dean Forest Greenway

Encouraging progress was reported. A route had been positively identified, and Council was awaiting letters indicating support from major landowners identified by John Grimshaw of Greenways and from private landowners identified by Sharon Freeman.

Following receipt of these letters of comfort, the route could be confirmed, the plans could be submitted to the District Council for planning approval and funding could be applied for.

3.4 Clerk's Report

It was agreed that a Parish newsletter would be produced in September, with closing date for copy around the end of August.

Action: Clerk

3.5 Deputy Clerk's Report

It was announced that Dean Forest Radio would be taking up the offer to provide them with facilities the West Dean Centre.

The Deputy Clerk had received quotations for repairs at the Council's 3 play parks recommended following a safety inspection for £1037 and for the resolution of issues raised at a fire safety inspection at the West Dean Centre, recommending sensors, emergency lighting, etc, for £1,600. Once three quotations had been received for each of these projects, the matter would be presented back to Council.

SC advised that there was a need to improve access to the Centre by disabled people.

It was agreed that a lone working policy was required to protect members, staff and Centre users.

It was agreed that a committee consisting of BF, BG, SC and Clerk and Deputy Clerk to consider these issues. **Action: Deputy Clerk to arrange**

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

The next meeting would be conducted by Zoom remote access technology, 7.00 pm, Wednesday 29th July 2020.