



# WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

Dave Kent  
Clerk to the Council

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## COUNCIL MINUTES

### **PUBLIC FORUM**

**There was no Public Forum**

### **Present:**

**WDPC COUNCILLORS:** B Freshwater (BF), A Moore (AM), P Dunford (PD), B Evans (BE), S Yeates (SY), A Bruce (AB), B Gayler, S Francis (SF), D Oliver (DO), A Grant (AG), J Richmond and J Dale (JD). D Kent (Clerk) and C Hooper (Deputy Clerk) were in attendance  
A Sumners  
M Elson (press)

### **COUNCIL FORMAL BUSINESS**

#### **1.1 Apologies were received from:**

A Grant, B Gayler, S Yeates and M Costley

#### **1.2 Declarations of Interest**

None received

**1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting** – The minutes of the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2020 were accepted as a true record to be signed by the Chair as soon as is feasible.

#### **1.4 Co-option of Councillor**

Averil Sumners' application to become a co-opted councillor for the Bream ward was considered, and she was appointed to the position. The Clerk would send to her the appropriate form.

#### **1.5 Meeting Protocols**

It was agreed that a way should be found to engage the public in Council business. The matter was considered fully in item 2.1 below.

### **2. Items for discussion and decision**

#### **2.1 Corona Virus Emergency**

i) Re-opening of the West Dean Centre and future Council meetings

BF reported that the decision was taken to hold the current meeting virtually was taken in view of recent government advice. It was acknowledged that government advice was confusing. It was agreed that it was necessary to re-engage the public in Council business, and there were different views expressed about means of enabling this to happen legally and safely.

It was agreed that officers would explore the possibility of conducting 'hybrid' meetings which were face to face but which allowed remote access.

This would involve acquiring technical devices and technical knowledge, which would include enhances microphone and camera technology, as well as procedures to include the management of

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present and remote participants in the meeting. It was agreed that an allocation of £1,000 would be made available for the procurement of appropriate technology. Officers would investigate options.

It was noted that the West Dean was already open for meetings, and that some users had returned, under controlled conditions.

ii) Council Play Parks

It was noted that the Council's play parks had reopened.

iii) It was agreed that SC would work with the Clerk to identify worthy recipients of a thank you card and to finalise the message of thanks.

## **2.2 Finance & Staffing**

i) The electronic payments for September 2020 as presented were approved.

ii) The automatic payments for September 2020 (standing orders and direct debits) were noted.

iii) JR and AM were appointed to provide the electronic authorisations for September 2020 bank payments.

iv) JD and SC would conduct the October Financial Inspection.

v) BF and SF had conducted a financial inspection on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020. This consisted of a bank reconciliation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to date, examining all payment transactions (invoices, etc) for that period. This was the first time that the EDGE finance system had been used to produce the necessary information, and the process was satisfactory.

vi) It was agreed that the recommendations contained in the recent staff appraisals in respect of staff salaries would be implemented.

The Deputy Clerk's hours were increased from 20 per week to 28 per week.

The Clerk would be moved from the top of the LC2 (substantive range) (point 28) to the above substantive range (29, with annual increments to point 32). Salary plus an incremental point for a professional qualification.

These changes with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

## **2.3 Climate Emergency/Village Veg**

AB provided a report on the progress of the Village veg project.

It was agreed that a budgetary requirement for the project would be presented to the next meeting for consideration.

It was agreed that at the next meeting of Council a Biodiversity emergency statement would be considered for adoption, with an appropriate form of wording perhaps based on the District Council model. Budgetary provision for the biodiversity and climate emergency campaigns would also be submitted to the meeting. It was agreed that publicity for these projects would be provided through newsletters, considered in Item 2.8 below.

## **2.4 Grant Award Process: Yorkley Court Farm S106 Funds Group**

It was noted that the initial meeting of the group had been held. BF was elected Chair, and administrative support would be provided by West Dean Parish Council.

It was reported that a draft application form for grant awards had been developed and circulated to group members for approval.

A defined area surrounding the Solar Farm development in the Lydney Town Council and West Dean Parish Council was identified from which organisations providing services for these communities could apply for fund grants.

It was noted that in the fund was currently held £45,378. 74. The fund receives an additional £9,000 for a further 15 years every December.

It had been agreed that £30,000 would be available for grant awards for immediate allocation, with a further allocation of £24,000 (to include December 2020 receipts) in the first half of 2021.

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Thereafter the sum of £9,000 would be made available for grant awards for the remainder of the term of the fund.

The funds would be held by the Forest of Dean District Council until allocated to award winners.

## **2.5 Grant Award Process: Gentian (Bream) Community Fund**

It was now clear that a planning application had been presented, so the grant process would be undertaken as previously agreed.

## **2.6 Budget 2021-22**

It was agreed that the annual informal budget setting meeting would take place at 7.30pm, Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October to consider 2021-22 budget, reserves and precept. Recommendations would be prepared for submission to Council on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020, which would allow changes to be made where necessary for submission to the Council meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> November, the last Council meeting before 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021, the final date for the submission of the precept demand. Items identified for possible funding included Road Safety, repairs to the Bream Cenotaph and the Climate & Biodiversity Emergencies and village veg initiatives discussed in item 2.3 above.

## **2.7 Scarr Bandstand**

Council offered full support to the project to construct a vandal-proof acoustic canopy for the bandstand area.

## **2.8 Parish Newsletter**

It was agreed that the current distribution was unsatisfactory and that a better system was required to get the newsletter out to more residents.

Councillors would seek to provide delivery to homes around the parish council area in a systematic way, using maps and identifying groups such as scouts to undertake home delivery for a fee. Other means of distribution should be identified. Consideration would be given to using mail services for delivery to remote addresses.

It was agreed that advertising would not be sought for future newsletters, but that news items featuring local businesses would be encouraged.

A November/December edition would be produced, which would give particular prominence to ecological and biodiversity issues.

## **2.9 Chair's Report**

Dean Forest Greenway (Parkend to Lydney Multi Use Track):

It was noted that complaints had been received from some residents of property adjoining the proposed track. These were being addressed. All local landowners apart from one had been contacted, and further 'letters of comfort' had been received.

It was hoped that the planning application for the track would be submitted around the end of October.

## **3.1 Neighbourhood Development Plan**

A report was submitted

## **3.2 Planning: 'Pin Factory' Site**

It was noted that the decision to demand a reduction of houses from 66 to 30, as proposed by the developer in the outline planning application, had not been included in the Council's observations to the District Council. A supplementary observation including this objection would be submitted to Planning Authority.

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At this point Council voted to extend the meeting by 30 minutes as 2½ hours had elapsed since the start of the meeting.

### **3.3 Dean Forest Greenway**

The matter had been considered in Chair's Report, 2.9 above

### **3.4 Speed Reduction Strategy Group**

It was agreed that an application for funding from the Police & Crime Commissioners office for up to £1,000 would be sought.

GCC Highways would be invited to the next meeting of the Group.

Contact would be made with the local PCSO to arrange free police speed surveys.

### **3.5 Reports on the Council Estate**

Reports were presented by the Deputy Clerk.

i) The lighting quotes for the West Dean Centre as presented and recommended by the Deputy Clerk were approved.

ii) It was agreed, as proposed, that vehicular access to the Council's Five Acres Sports Fields should be provided. A maximum of £6,500 was allocated for the scheme, although it was hoped that a lower quotation for the work would be provided. Forestry England and Gloucestershire County Council had been consulted about access safety and access rights.

iii) A meeting had been arranged for the FVAF youth worker, Bream Councillors with Bream Sports Club in respect of re-siting the 'Mud Park' youth shelter at the village Sports Club.

The transfer of responsibility for the 'Mud Park' from the Parish Council to the District Council was under consideration.

### **3.6 Clerk's Report**

The report was presented.

The Clerk reported that the closing date for the receipt of applications for Council grant applications was noon, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020. 4 applications had been received to date.

It was agreed that the Clerk accepts the appointment to take up the offer to represent the Council at the District Council Five Acres Project Committee.

### **3.7 Deputy Clerk's Report**

The report was presented.

The Deputy Clerk reported that quotations to repair the Bream Cenotaph were being invited. (Also see Item 2.6 above). Costs were expected to be around £3,500, and would be reported back to Council.

The meeting closed at 10.00pm

The next meeting would be held under agreed Council protocols, at 7.00 pm, Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020.