



WEST DEAN PARISH COUNCIL

Dave Kent

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Clerk to the Council

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COUNCIL MINUTES

686

Meeting Date: 28th July 2021 Location: West Dean Centre

Present: WDPC COUNCILLORS: S Crick (SC) (Chair), A Moore (AM), P Dunford (PD), B Evans (BE), A Bruce (AB), S Francis (SF), M Costley (MC), J Richmond (JR), S Yeates (SY), J Dale (JD), B Gayler and S Dunford (SD).

Members of the Public: S Freeman and B Garside

D Kent (DK) (Clerk) and K Carpenter (KC) (Deputy Clerk) were in attendance

PUBLIC FORUM

Ms Freeman presented a detailed report on the progress of the Dean Forest Greenway, as documented here:

I would like to say how great it is that Lydney Town Council have at last put their money where their mouth is and allocated £10,000 towards this wonderful project. Along with the arrival in the bank of the £25,000 from FODDC for pre planning works and necessary ecological surveys etc and the further £30,000 promised shows the confidence and support for the DFG that these two important partners have recognised.

I would like to reassure members that the two landowners along the route whose involvement was important have given us written evidence that they support the route and, as soon as we have planning permission, are happy that legal agreements will be drawn up. I really hope now that members who were concerned that what some refer to as 'comfort letters' are well and truly in our possession and that we can move to the next exciting stage of the project.

The pandemic lockdown and restrictions have made project very difficult to work on and set us back but we are now ready to move to the next stage. I'm pleased to report that last Monday a group of us met with one of the families who have agreed to lease or sell us a small piece of their land alongside the railway line. It was a friendly and productive meeting with the family reiterating the importance of the safety issue of the route, especially for the children of our local communities.

As Covid restrictions and confidentiality issues are easing, the next meeting of the Steering Group will discuss publicising the project with the first event being a volunteer work camp in September to clear undergrowth from those sections of the route which need it. Details can then be advertised on posters, social media and word of mouth. We hope that this will build momentum for this project and attract a large number of locals to join the volunteer working party. Also on the agenda will be how we consult on the project with the public now that we can hold public meetings.

To clarify the status of the planning application, in the summer of last year, the government offered a multi million pound 'Active Transport' fund to be used for improving the health of the nation and we were told that our project fulfilled all of the criteria. It was to be administered locally by GCC who encouraged us to submit the application while funds were available. This we did in November of last year knowing that we needed to do more ecological and sustainability studies. In January we were saddened to be told that this money was no longer available so we withdrew the application and surveys are now being undertaken on dormice, bat flights etc ready for the anticipated re-submission of the application in October/November.

Ms Freeman also reported the delay of one month on the payment of an invoice for £14 from the Yorkley Community Centre to the Parish Council, and queried the classification of salary payments as confidential.

A written report from County Councillor B Hoyland had been circulated.

COUNCIL FORMAL BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies were received from:

Parish Councillors: D Oliver and A Grant

County Councillor: B Hoyland

District Councillors: J Elsmore, R Leppington and P Hiatt

1.2 Declarations of Interest

None received

1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – The minutes of the meeting of 30th June 2021 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair.

It was proposed by SD and seconded by JD that the minutes should not merely record decisions made and actions approved, but should also reflect the tenor of the discussions which led to those decisions. This would be a matter for the next meeting of the Governance Committee to consider. Following consideration of the minutes, it was agreed that Council should consider the procurement of a hearing aid system for the West Dean Centre.

1.4 Co-option of Ward Councillor for Bream Ward

B Garside made a statement in support of his application for co-option as councillor for the Bream ward. His application was unanimously approved. He then took his place in the councillors' section of the conference room.

1.5 Recruitment of Parish Janitor/Caretaker

It was agreed that as only one application had been received, that candidate would be interviewed by a panel consisting of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, B Garside and SF. The Job Description for the post as presented was approved. The panel was delegated with the power to make the appointment.

2.1 Corona Virus Emergency

It was noted that after the ending of the Covid restrictions that user groups were gradually returning to the West Dean Centre.

2.2 Finance & Staffing

- i) The schedule of electronic payments for July 2021, as presented to the meeting, were approved. It was advised, that in view of the excess days that the Clerk had worked the previous year, his full holiday allowance should be taken in the current year.
- ii) JR and B Gayler were appointed to make the electronic authorisations for July 2021 bank payments.
- iii) It was noted that PD and AM had conducted a satisfactory financial inspection of documents and bank statements for the previous month.
- iv) The August financial inspection would be conducted by SC and SF.
- v) It was resolved that the staff appraisal for the Clerk would be conducted by BE, JD and SD before 21st August 2021.

2.3 Dean Forest Greenway

An update was provided in the Clerk's report.

Documentation on the Greenway would be provided to B Garside

2.4 Climate Emergency/Village Veg

No report was delivered, but the terms of reference of the Council committee would be presented to Council at the August meeting.

2.5 Highways & Road Traffic Issues

There had been no meeting of the Highways and Footpaths Committee.

It had been advised by GCC Highways that the speed surveys would be conducted at the 3 priority sites in the Parish Council area.

The Christchurch site would be reviewed, and the cooperation of the Scouts would be sought to carry out the survey at Parkend.

JR would download the data from the VAS devices and analyse the results.

It was agreed that any speed survey required for the road crossing at Forest Road, Lydney, would be negotiated with the County Council and Lydney Town Council.

It was agreed that the terms of reference of the Highways and Footpaths Committee would be expanded to include Rights of Way.

2.6 Yorkley Court Farm

No report was made

2.7. Governance

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20th July 2021 were approved.

Items to be given priority at the next Governance Committee meeting would be the Council's Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Declaration of Interests and Health & Safety. It was intended that after review and update at this Committee meeting, along with recommendations to full council on the matter of the recording of the minutes. These documents would be submitted to the August Council meeting for approval. Councillors were requested to attend the Committee meeting on 3rd August 2021.

The Committee was thanked for the work it was carrying out.

2.8 Planning

The minutes of meetings held on 4th and 18th July were received.

B Evans was thanked for his detailed investigative work on a particular Bream planning application. Council considered the invitation to join the Cross Parish Communications Group, which was set up to consider a policy in respect of the development of housing and infrastructure.

It was decided that Council would respond to this invitation with caution, as it was necessary to understand any agenda or preconceived policies that the Group was set up to promote.

It was agreed that PD would contact the group to seek further information, including the group's terms of reference, before Council takes the matter further forward.

2.9 Youth Provision

It was reported that the youth shelter at 'The Mud Park', Bream, was to be removed from its site and temporarily installed at a Bream location, failing which it would be offered to Crow Ash.

JR would consider the possibility of creating a Trust to manage play facilities in Berry Hill.

2.10 Web/Social Media

It was reported that a meeting had been held with Council's web manager. It was intended to reconstruct Council's web and social media presence into a format more accessible to young people, to be interactive, to report road issues and making more use of photographic and video images. A further meeting would be arranged for the Web designer to present a new version based on these requirements.

2.11 Five Acres Project

A brief report had been provided in the Clerk's notes.

2.12 Newsletter

It was reported that time constraints had not allowed Council to pursue the option of investigating alternative means of printing and distributing newsletters. Options would be investigated and presented in good time for adoption before the production of the next newsletter.

2.13 Welcome Back Fund

JD presented this scheme, which was intended to encourage community events to celebrate the end of Covid lockdown.

An application was made to the Welcome Back Fund via FoDDC, requesting funding for gazebos, planters and wild flower seeds. We were told our application had been successful.

Seed requests will be funded (requested by Pillowell, Whitecroft and Yorkley) and, a bulk buy by FoDDC may provide the planters (requested by Sling). However, at a late stage FoDDC advised that there is only £2499 available for gazebos between WDPC and the two other councils that applied for this funding.

FoDDC suggested that we either share one gazebo between all the applicant halls, which is not feasible, or ask WDPC for top-up funding. The shortfall is estimated to be £2,465.

Council is disappointed with this misinformation provided by FoDDC. A strong complaint is to be made to FoDDC in respect of this late change of policy which risks the cancellation of an eagerly awaited celebratory event, requesting the restoration of funds which were promised and which have encouraged communities to arrange events.

The reserve position is for the Parish Council to provide the funding which has been withdrawn.

This would be forthcoming in the event that FoDDC refuses to provide the promised funding, but it is hoped that having raised expectations FoDDC will fulfil promises made and restore the funding that the project was relying on.

SD also drew Councillors attention to the second part of the grand bid – the Welcome Back Event to be held in Yorkley on the 19th September. Councillors were urged to make local businesses aware of the opportunity to present themselves to the community.

2.14 Chair's Report

Not presented

3.1 Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Development Plan

A report was presented.

3.2 Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report was presented.

3.3 Deputy Clerk Report

The Deputy Clerk's report was presented. She was commended on her work for the Council and West Dean Centre.

The meeting closed at 21.38 hrs.

The next Council Meeting would be held as a physical meeting, under protocols in place at the time, at the West Dean Centre, at 7.00 pm, Wednesday 25th August 2021, *with consideration given to streaming the meeting to external observers.*