

LEAFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held at 8pm on Wednesday 10th June 2020 via Video Conference

Those Present: Cllr Gina Pearce (Chairman), Cllrs Luke Caunt, Richard Hamilton, Jeremy Russ & Kevin Ward

In attendance: Sharon Henley, Clerk/RFO, District Councillors Gill Hill and Kieran Mullins and County Councillor Liam Walker

Members of Public: 4

1. **Welcome & Apologies for Absence:** There were none.

Ordinary Council Meeting Standing Items

2. **Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda:** There were none.

3. **Approval of Draft Minutes:**

3.1. **Ordinary Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 13th May 2020:** These were approved.

3.2. **Annual Meeting on Wednesday 20th May 2020:** These were approved.

4. **Clerk's Report/Matters Arising:**

4.1. The dry stone wall on the highway in Lower End, beneath the Smallpox Memorial was crumbling and required repair so had been reported on fixmystreet.com. Cllr Pearce had also reported a significant pothole adjacent to the Green. Cllr Liam Walker to follow up these reports and report back.

4.2. Dog fouling signs had been erected on the footpath adjacent to Witney Lane. Unfortunately some had since been destroyed by walkers. It was agreed to write a short article for the website and Facebook asking walkers to use the dog bins provided or to take their dog waste home.

4.3. A skip had been placed outside a private residence on Parish Council land and the Clerk had written to the resident to remind them that PC permission should be sought under the Skip Policy. A reminder about the Skip Policy had been placed on the website and Facebook.

4.4. The Clerk was to take up the additional role of Town Clerk to Northleach with Eastington Town Council at the end of the month and had booked one week's holiday w/c 22nd June.

5. **County & District Councillors' Reports:**

5.1. County Councillor Liam Walker reported:

- This had been the 18th day of no coronavirus deaths in an Oxfordshire hospital. There had been a spike in cases over last two weeks but more testing was picking up new cases. Schools Y1 and Y6 had gone back which had been positive but parents still had concerns. Secondary schools had been having problems with home/school transport and social distancing but were working with providers.
- OCC were investing almost £600k through the emergency Active Travel fund in a series of measures to support communities and focus on encouraging people to walk and cycle, not use public transport.
- 20mph scheme – OCC to introduce this scheme to ensure Oxon benefitted from Active Travel monies. It was recognised that these schemes were sometimes very expensive to implement but speeding could be a problem in villages. Cllr Walker's recent online survey about the scheme had attracted the biggest response from Leafield with 58 responses, 54 in favour, 4 against which showed overwhelming support for the project within the village. He would now take time to liaise with PCs and residents and the scheme would be put into policy for County and parishes would be able to opt in or out. Cllr Walker thought the scheme would work well in Leafield due to the support shown and he would keep the parish updated.
- Ongoing problems with speeding in Witney Lane and options were discussed and it was thought that tackling this could be part of the above project.
- The Chairman thanked Cllr Walker for requesting the clearance of footpaths by OCC Rights of Way.

5.2. District Councillor Gill Hill reported:

- The Hub at WODC continued to help vulnerable and shielded people and was working well.

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- Ubico were now collecting rubbish and doing a good job.
- Discretionary grants had been introduced for those paying business rates.

5.3. District Councillor Kieran Mullins reported:

- Businesses were opening up slowly and there was a big push to get the economy going in the local area. WODC were sending out packs to local businesses that had walk-in customers (floor markers etc).
- There was a Witney Town Centre Plan to alleviate traffic pedestrian pinch points. It was expected that 20mph zones and wider pavements would be introduced, amongst other measures.
- Business grants continued to be made available to help businesses, so far 2,000 businesses had received nearly £25m. Small business grants were still available, details on the WODC website.

6. **Opportunity for the Public to Speak:** No requests were made.

Policy & Finance

7. Approval of Receipts and Payments for June

Payee	Reason	Payment inc VAT	Receipt	Power To Spend
Castle Water	Water for Pavilion 29th Feb-28th Aug 2020	£56.85		LGA 1972 s.133
Zoom	Monthly Fee May	£14.39		LGA 1972 s.111
Gina Pearce	Expenses Claim for Printer Ink	£71.48		LGA 1972 s.111
Information Commissioner's Office ICO	Annual Data Protection Fee	£35.00		LGA 1972 s.111
Ionos	Website & Domain Hosting June	£1.20		LGA 1972 s.111
OALC	Gina Pearce On-Line Chairmanship Course (refund due for previous course)	£36.00		LGA 1972 s.111
McCracken & Son	May grass cutting Inv 9530	£398.40		LGA 1972 s.133
Sharon Henley	Clerk's Salary for June	Personal		LGA 1972 s.112(2)
Local Govt Pension Scheme	Sharon Henley Clerk's Pension for June - Employer & Employee Contribution	Personal		LGA 1972 s.112(2)
HMRC	Sharon Henley Clerk's NI & Tax for June	Personal		LGA 1972 s.112(2)
Sharon Henley	Reimbursement of 20p overpayment on May salary		0.20	
Village Hall Committee	Annual Peppercorn Rent for Village Hall		£2.00	
Community Gym	Rent April-June		£325.00	

The above receipts and payments were approved unanimously.

8. Revocation of Clerk's Delegated Powers during Covid-19 Pandemic (as granted at March Meeting): The Council was now meeting regularly via video conference so it was agreed that the delegated powers were no longer required.

9. RFO Update:

9.1. Current Financial Situation:

- An Actual vs Budget report had been circulated and there were no issues to report.
- There had been a 20p overpayment of the clerk's May salary due to the tax amount changing. The Standing Order had now been amended for June and the Clerk had refunded the 20p via BACs.
- The Gym Committee had discussed their rent holiday and had paid the April-June amount of £325 given that they had received a Business Continuity Grant from WODC.
- Following feedback from the Internal Auditor the Clerk had received demos of the RBS Alpha and Scribe financial packages as well as the RBS Cemetery software. The Clerk to further review the possibility of recommending a new financial package for next year's budget.

9.2. Progress with External Audit: The auditor had received the AGAR and associated papers and had responded to query the Internal Auditor Report which was lacking the dates of previous audits. This had also been previously queried by the Clerk/RFO. The internal auditor had since added the dates of the two previous internal audits and all documentation had been updated and sent to the External Auditor.

10. Progress on Loan Application for the New Burial Ground: Responses had been sent to the questions raised by PWLB and the application was with the approver.

11. Fixed Asset Register: Additions and amendments had been made as agreed in the May meeting and the Clerk confirmed that the format was as recommended by the SLCC. Historical records provided by the Churchwarden had confirmed that the Lych Gate was provided as a gift by the village. Insurance valuations listed on the register still required review and the insurers had advised the Council to obtain updated values. For buildings they recommended obtaining a surveyor's valuation every 3-5 years. The Clerk and Cllr Russ to investigate this recommendation and further update the register for review and approval at a future meeting.

Recreation & Leisure

12. Play Area Monthly Report: The Clerk reported:

- The play areas remained closed as per government instruction with signs and hazard tape in place.
- A tree adjacent to the play area had shed large branches in the windy weather. These had been tidied into the corner of the car park undergrowth and McCrackens had been asked to clear them on their next visit.
- The tree surgeon had inspected and advised that if any further failure occurred then mitigation options would need to be considered.
- The area at the rear of the Village Hall and Pavilion had become very overgrown again, blocking the rear fire exit routes from each building. Following a discussion with the Hall Committee, the Clerk had instructed the contractor to clear this area by the end of June in order to meet the anticipated date when the Pavilion and Village Hall may open again.
- The wetpour around the equipment in the new play area had become dry in the recent hot, dry weather and had receded, causing large gaps. The edges had also lifted and were loose, causing trip hazards. The ROSPA play safety inspection was expected in July so it is proposed to await their report as the play area was still closed.
- There are areas of long grass in front of the Pavilion and Village Hall and the Clerk to ask the contractor to include those areas when grass cutting.
- There were large cracks in the interior walls of the Pavilion. The Clerk to check with the Gym Committee whether any had appeared in the Gym area and this to be discussed at a future meeting.

13. Village Hall General

13.1. General Updates: Cllr Pearce reported that there would be a Committee meeting via Zoom the following day. It was planned to discuss re-opening with input from all user groups. The Pre-School had re-opened on 1st June and would update on issues.

- 13.2. **Discussion and agreement on request from Witney Radio to install a transmitter in the Village Hall:** Witney Radio is a community interest company which runs as an OFCOM licensed radio station in Witney. They had 40 plus volunteers who donate their time to the station to provide local radio to West Oxfordshire. They requested to install a relay station in the village hall in order to expand their service north of Witney and would plan in exchange to promote activities in Leafield. A transmitter had recently been installed at Eynsham Village Hall and the estimated electricity costs were £34 per annum which was being donated to Witney Radio as it was a voluntary public service. The Village Hall Committee were happy to accommodate the request and proposed to donate the electricity costs in recognition of future publicity. After discussion it was agreed that the Clerk should determine how often access to the transmitter was required, whether there was an optimum location and how close to the mast it needed to be. Also, the value of the equipment for the insurer.

14. Village Hall Car Park:

- 14.1. **Review of Tender Specification for Re-Tender:** Cllr Caunt reported that two tender responses had been received and costs were far higher than anticipated. It was thought that during the pandemic had been an awkward time for the tender and could have resulted in tenders being over-priced. The design consultant advised that some costs were too high and the original costs of £80-100,000 could still be achieved.
- 14.2. **Discussion/Agreement on next steps:** The existing tender specification was discussed and it was agreed that at least three responses would be required from the re-tender to make a reasonable comparison and determine whether timing rather than specification was the issue. Cllr Caunt to review the current specification with the design consultants and look to make some minor changes, including removal of lighting. Costs to be sought from the design consultant for additional work required with a view to issuing a re-tender for review in August.

Environment

15. St Michael & All Angel's Churchyard:

- 15.1. **Progress on Closure:** The Churchwarden attended the meeting and was invited to update on progress. The application was being progressed by the Privy Council but there were delays due to staff currently working at home during the pandemic. The PCC were awaiting further information and it was anticipated that it could still take under September until the handover. Cllr Pearce requested information on the expected condition of the Churchyard at handover.
- 15.2. **Identification of Maintenance Tasks.** Cllr Hamilton noted comments on social media about long grass in the Churchyard. He had been liaising with the Churchwarden on current tasks and the grass was being done twice a month in summer and once a month in the winter by a contractor who would be prepared to continue. The Churchwarden advised that the Churchyard was now being cut by the contractor but parts of the Churchyard were being wilded as had been agreed by the PCC some years ago and this was to encourage wildflowers and wildlife. Cllr Hamilton and the Churchwarden to work on a maintenance plan.
- 15.3. **Plans for Churchyard Working Party:** The working party to be progressed by Cllr Hamilton for further discussion at the August meeting and an article to be placed in Leafield What's On, Facebook and the website to attract members.

16. New Burial Ground:

- 16.1. **Update on Proposed Start Date for the Project:** The Clerk confirmed that the contractors had been undertaking some preparatory work at their premises and were ready to start on site but would need to treat the area with weedkiller 7-10 days prior to starting on site. It was noted that the PWLB loan was not yet approved but councillors were keen not to lose the contractor and their availability. The Clerk to set up an outdoor meeting with social distancing to include all interested parties to discuss any pre-start issues in the next couple of weeks.
- 16.2. **Contractor working practices during Construction Phase (accommodation etc.):** Due to Covid-19 restrictions the contractors would not now been seeking local accommodation during the construction phase and this may result in cost implications due to additional travel. The Clerk had asked the contractor to quantify these costs. It was thought that any additional sum would need to come from the contingency budget within the project.

16.3. Land access arrangements during Construction Phase: The PC's solicitor and the contractor were happy with the neighbouring farmer's proposed Land Access Agreement which set out details of the terms and route to be used by the contractor to access the burial ground site. The contractor had commented that there was a nominal figure allowed for remediation work in the budget, although all their machinery was lightweight so damage to the neighbour's land was not anticipated. The Clerk to send the neighbour the site access plan from the contractor to seek his approval with a view to work starting on site as soon as the loan was approved.

The contractors requested permission to store machinery and chipped stone in the Village Hall Car Park for a maximum of two weeks during the project and councillors agreed to this proposal. The Clerk had requested a secure compound was erected to ensure safety of pedestrians and also to protect from vandalism or theft. The contractor to look at using Heras fencing and confirm that all deliveries would have a banksman.

16.4 Resolution to join the ICCM (Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management) at an annual subscription cost of £95.00: This was required to provide advice when setting up the burial ground and was agreed unanimously. The Churchwarden had received an enquiry about a plot reservation from a resident of Witney. It had not been determined whether plot reservations would be limited to village residents only. The Churchwarden to direct the enquiry to the Clerk who would explain that terms and conditions were still under discussion at present but that we would confirm in due course.

17. Winter Damage to Village Greens: Discussion on potential mitigating actions – Cllr Pearce confirmed that no budget was available this year but that Councillors were keen to discuss solutions for progressing matters in the future. A number of options were discussed, including the installation of large tree logs around the edge of the Green to create an aesthetically pleasing solution. It was decided that Cllrs Pearce, Russ and Hamilton would carry out a site visit and create a map of key problem areas for discussion at the August meeting.

18. Planning

Planning Applications Received & Decision Notices

None to report.

Transport & Highways

19. 20mph Speed Limit Area: Discussion on proposal to apply for OCC funding: The details had been outlined by County Cllr Liam Walker in item 5. Councillors discussed concerns about pedestrians, particularly in parts of Lower End where there was no pavement, so pedestrian or cycling enhancements in Lower End would be welcomed. Traffic calming was although thought to be an option. The Clerk to highlight these suggestions to Cllr Walker.

Consultation & Communication

20. Website

20.1. Update on work to new website www.leaffieldparishcouncil.org: Contact details of Community Groups and Village Hall user groups had been removed in order to comply with GDPR with website users to contact the Clerk of Parish Council or Village Hall respectively for further details. The author of Leaffield What's On had offered to update the Clerk on any changes in group contact details. It was confirmed that links to other community group websites could be added on request.

20.2. Confirmation of arrangements for old website www.leaffieldvillage.co.uk: Web traffic has now been transferred to the new web address and all content has been migrated from the old to the new website so it was not thought necessary to retain the old website. Cllr Pearce to check and confirm with the Clerk that all maps were now migrated to the new website.

20.3. Introduction of Councillor email addresses linked to new website: It was previously agreed that councillors would switch to more secure email addresses linked to the new website. The Clerk to circulate councillors' new log in details for changeover to the new addresses. The Clerk to also arrange for her own email address to be updated to the new format and publicise the change. An out of office response to be placed on the old email address if all emails could not be forwarded.

21. **Review of Correspondence Register:** A resident had asked whether children’s goalposts could be provided for the football pitch. The Clerk to find what specification would be suitable and Cllr Pearce to ask the Gym Committee or Village Hall Committee if would be possible to fund this from the recent grant monies received.

Ordinary Council Meeting Standing Items

22. **Around the Village – *Items to note or for future discussion.*** There were no items.

23. **Date of Next Meeting:**

Ordinary Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 8th July, venue tbc

There being no further business the meeting closed at 22.06 hours.

Signed: _____

Date: _____