

MINUTES

For the meeting of Annual Parish Council, held on Wednesday, 1st May 2019

Meeting Number 19.338

19.338.1 Resolution: To Elect a Chairman & Vice Chairman

Councillor Susan Daenke (SD) nominated Councillor Diane Bohm (DB) in the role of Chairman if prepared to stand. DB confirmed she would stand.

The nomination was seconded by Councillor Ruth Whitfield and it was supported unanimously by the Council.

DB nominated SD for Vice Chairman, the nomination was seconded by Councillor Robin Stafford Allen (RSA) and it was supported unanimously by the Council.

19.338.2 To Receive: Declaration of Acceptance of Office for Chairman

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office for Chairman was duly signed by the Chairman and clerk.

Action: Clerk to file Declaration of Acceptance by Chairman.

19.338.3 To Receive: Any changes to Councillors Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked for Declarations of Interest, Cllr Mullane noted his ongoing interest in Southfield Farm.

Cllr Stafford-Allen noted his interest on the land behind Guernsey Cottage fronting the School Field.

Councillors Donne (HD) and Evans (KE) sent their apologies which were approved and were therefore not present. Cllrs Bohm (DB), Daenke (SD), Mullane (NM), Whitfield (RW) and Stafford Allen (RSA) were present.

There were 5 members of the public present.

19.338.4 Resolution: To Approve Appointment or Reappointment of Advisory Groups (Chair)

The following advisory groups to the Parish Council were retained from 2018/2019:

Traffic, HR, Governance, Planning, Finance, Neighbourhood Plan and Works.

The resolution to appoint advisory groups detailed above was proposed by DB and seconded by SD. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

19.338.5 Resolution: To Approve Appointment or Reappointment of Chairs of Advisory Groups (Chair)

The following Chairs of advisory groups to the Parish Council were named as:

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Traffic: Councillor Neil Mullane

HR: Councillor Susan Daenke

Governance: Councillor Ruth Whitfield

Works – Councillor Robin Stafford Allen

Neighbourhood Plan – Councillor Diane Bohm

Planning – Councillor Henry Donne

Finance – Councillor Ruth Whitfield

The resolution to appoint Chairs to the advisory groups detailed above was proposed by SD and seconded by NM. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

19.338.6 For Information: Overview of Finance Working Group and RFO position (DB)

DB summarised the position on the finance working group. Following a request to the community for a new position as Councillor on the Council no one has come forward.

A discussion was held amongst Councillors and a solution was proposed that Governance and Finance working groups would be covered by RW in the interim period.

The position would then be reviewed when the Council had a full complement of Councillors.

It was confirmed that two Finance Advisory Groups meetings have been held, one in March and one in April 2019.

19.338.7 For Information: Report on Management of Casual Vacancy (Clerk)

The clerk highlighted the position from Cherwell District Council on the recruitment of a new Councillor. The 14-day notice period to demand a by-election to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Cllr Graeme Forbes expired and no by-election was demanded. Cherwell confirmed that Weston on the Green PC is free to fill the vacancy by co-option.

Action: Clerk to alter vacancy poster on parish noticeboard and confirm situation on PC website.

19.338.8 For Information: Meeting Attendance (Chair)

There has been a slight issue this year over the attendance at meetings by Councillors, sometimes for good reasons. DB has had private meetings to discuss this issue further.

In the case of Councillor Kieran Evans, he has unfortunately decided to resign from the Parish Council as he feels he is unable to commit to the meetings and his role as a Councillor. He has confirmed however that he will continue to help the Council where he can which will be much appreciated.

Councillor Evans tendered his resignation by email on 29th April 2019 and DB accepted the resignation.

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The Council would like to thank Kieran for all his efforts on the Council and look forward to working with him in the future.

The clerk confirmed she had notified Cherwell District Council of the resignation and was currently waiting for further information.

DB raised a concern that she doesn't want the view that the Parish Council is a difficult place to be and she believed the Council has no feeling of negativity. Two resignations in the first year feel more uncomfortable, however the decisions were for personal reasons and it was felt they were no reflection on the Council.

DB then went on to ask SD as Chair of HR to put together a proposal to flesh out who in the village we can ask to join the PC as we need a way of reaching out to all villagers.

RSA would like to formal thank Kieran for all his hard work for the village through all the works activities including a fantastic BBQ for the volunteer day; he has done a lot for the village.

NM commented that there is no negativity on the Council, the pace we are going at is hard and it can be difficult to manage both sides of PC and job/business. It's right that we attend meetings consistently.

RW made the point that lessons can be learned from these circumstances. The PC need to be as clear as possible about the time commitment and what's involved in being on the PC. We need to talk to prospective councillors openly to make sure they are making the right decision.

SD commented the PC needs to reflect how much work is currently going on in the village which dictates the amount of involvement required.

Action: Clerk to wait for information from Cherwell DC and then highlight the vacancy process to the Council.

Action: SD to put together a proposal to flesh out who in the village we can ask to join the PC.

19.338.9 Resolution: To Approve End of Year Financial Statement (DB)

DB presented a summary of the 2019 Finance Report.

2018/2019 was a year of transition with the major priority being compliance in operational aspects.

The internal audit report last year highlighted a lack of processes formally undertaken by the Council and this year was a year of transition creating a Council that was operationally compliant.

Fines were also incurred last year due to the late submission of the annual return.

This year the PC has instigated several changes including a new internal audit company, clerk hours have increased and there is a new book keeper.

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Expenses have increased when comparing 2019 to 2018 in the financial analyses and it was noted that the Council was previously run on a shoe string budget. For example, IT Expenditure shows an increase because it was decided to purchase a computer and printer to be owned directly by the Parish Council, rather than relying on the personal computer owned by the Parish Clerk. The PC are also accruing money for major projects in the future such as traffic calming or the potential of legal proceedings over various issues including the School Field, Neighbourhood Plan and Expressway.

There are currently 4 bank accounts, 1 of which is the main current account with the remainder holding reserves for major projects.

RW commented that the inclusion of quarterly reports at PC meetings will highlight variances vs budget.

Whilst NM mentioned that large one-off costs should ease up and more of the benefit of current projects will begin to be seen in the village. There also needs to be clarity over where apportioned funds for larger projects are to be spent.

A member of the public then commented that the PC were coming from a hard place at the start of this council year and were playing catch up. The PC has to spend more time on process than previous Councils as compliance is now greater. They went on to add that the finances were a bit mismatched; it is more professional now and it shows but that this can't be used as an excuse going forward. The precept has increased and residents need to see the benefits in the village which currently they have not seen to date. The resident summarised by saying the PC has been doing a good job, but the village has now got to see the benefits.

The resolution to approve the end of year financial statement for 2018/2019 was proposed by DB and seconded by NM. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

19.338.10 Resolution: To Approve Code of Conduct for Parish Council for 2019/2020 (Clerk)

The Code of Conduct was presented to the Council for approval.

The resolution to approve Code of Conduct for Parish Council for 2019/2020 was proposed by RW and seconded by RSA. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

Action: Clerk to sign Code of Conduct and put on PC website.

19.338.11 Public Participation session

There was nothing to note in this session.

Meeting Closed: 20.15

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