

## MINUTES

For the virtual meeting of Parish Council, held on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020

### Meeting Number 20.354

The Chair opened the meeting and reiterated the rules surrounding a virtual Parish Council meeting for Weston on the Green.

#### Public Participation

There were no comments from the public.

#### 20.354.1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Bohm (DB), Davis (SD), Donne (HD), Whitfield (RW), Stafford Allen (RSA) and Mullane (NM) were all present via Zoom call.

There were 2 members of the public present via Zoom call.

#### 20.354.2 Declarations of Interest

There was one declaration of interest from RSA regarding the Schoolfield in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### 20.354.3 To Receive and Approve: Minutes of the Virtual Parish Council meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020

The minutes of the Virtual Parish Council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 were discussed with no changes required.

The minutes for the Parish Council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 were then moved by RSA and seconded by HD. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

**Action:** Clerk to present minutes to Chair to sign, then file and upload to the web.

#### 20.354.4 For Information: Chairs Comment (DB)

The Chair presented her report to the Council highlighting the further relaxation of the lockdown rules from 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020 with both the pubs and children's playground opening. The Council is asked to keep a vigilant eye open for those in need and also to encourage the slow process of returning to what is called "the new normal". As many in the village are over 70 years old, there are still concerns about emerging into this life – shopping, errand running and socialising. Support systems should continue to be in place until we are sure it is fairly safe to assume people are ready to look after themselves. DB ended with a huge thank you to the people in the village who have supplied services – the Village Pantry and Village Hall Committee in particular, along with the hard work of the Council.

#### 20.354.5 For Information: Clerk report to note (Clerk)

The clerk highlighted the report provided to the Council which covered re-opening of the playground on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020, annual inspection of the playground, highways updates and the Oxfordshire Councillor Priority Fund for 2020/21.

**Action:** Clerk to contact Councillor Griffiths to investigate the sum available to the Parish for the Councillor Priority Fund for 2020/21.

#### 20.354.6 For Information: Update on the Neighbourhood Plan Examination (DB/SD)

DB provided an overview of the latest status of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) following the examination hearing held on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The examiner's report was published on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and can be found on the Cherwell District Council (CDC) website under Neighbourhood Plans and will also be placed on the Parish Council website.

The Policy Lead at CDC confirmed that they accept this examination decision and are proceeding with a recommendation to the Executive Committee of CDC on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020 that this NP now be accepted. If agreed, the status of the plan will be a serious consideration in planning decisions that affect the parish. Sadly, due to Covid19 elections and referenda are put off until May 2021 but central government has made it clear that NP's 'in waiting' will be important considerations.

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The recommendations of the examiner are acceptable to the Schoolfield Group. We are advised to apply to have the schoolfield designated as a Local Green Space or possibly a non-designated Heritage Asset and to include this in a future review of the plan.

There is a piece of work to be done to revitalise the NP in the eyes of the village and to introduce it to those new to the village along with creating a 2- 4 year plan for implementing aspects of the NP, if accepted in referendum.

Roger Evans (member of the Schoolfield Group, RE) was in virtual attendance at the meeting and queried, following the examiners comments on using green belt land for affordable housing, whether the Fir Tree Farm site would be progressed under an exception. DB confirmed that it would only be submitted as a rural exception site.

RE went on to add the design sketch for Fir Tree Farm scheme didn't look like it would pass the design code for CDC or the NP. He highlighted that the Parish Council could provide a site brief with guidelines and offered any assistance required. The site has been gifted to the village, which is very generous of the owner, but RE highlighted that it is not necessary to go that far and has suggested an alternative arrangement for the owner.

SD commented that the designs for the site do not currently pass the NP's stringent criteria for design or layout and there have been some discussions about alternative designs which need to be looked at carefully before submitting an application. SD commented that people need to be made aware of what the NP can do to safeguard the village.

**Action:** Clerk to place Neighbourhood Plan Examination Report on the Parish Council website.

**20.354.7 For Information:** Affordable Housing update (DB)

DB commented on the latest developments with regards to affordable housing in the village. The Fir Tree Farm application is being prepared for pre-application to Cherwell District Council (CDC). The Neighbourhood Plan examiners view was that Neighbourhood Plans are allowed to designate housing in green belt land on the basis of rural exception. CDC has not agreed with this as a policy. However, it is felt that putting in this pre-application, which has 6-8 affordable homes plus an extension of the commercial unit, will be useful as the Planning Department will have to take a view on whether it is a rural exception site.

Discussions with Sanctuary have not been taken forward as there is some discussion necessary with the Housing Department at CDC and the Council will need to look at more than one housing association.

Future work to be undertaken includes the pre-application statement on Fir Tree Farm, increase in number of young people and the elderly on the housing register for the village (to prove need) and formal discussions with housing associations.

SD queried if a flyer detailing how to register on the housing register could go into the shop and on the noticeboard with HD suggesting a loose flyer in the Village News.

**Action:** DB/Clerk to add information on how to register on housing register in village news, noticeboard and shop.

**20.354.8 Resolution: To Approve** Parish Council Asset Register (HD)

HD presented the updated register of Parish Council assets for approval.

The resolution to approve the latest version of the Parish Council Asset Register was proposed by HD and seconded by RW, all Councillors were in agreement.

**Action:** Clerk to place the updated asset register onto the Parish Council website.

**20.354.9 For Information:** Review of Internal Audit Report and Parish Council response (RW)

RW provided a summary of the response to the Internal Auditors report, which analyses the processes of the Parish Council and was received by Weston on the Green Parish Council on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

In previous years the Parish Council's internal audit has been assessed against a simple red, amber, green traffic light system. This year the same 13 categories are used by the Internal Auditor but each of these is given a percentage rating. The Internal Auditor found three of the categories to be inapplicable to our Council.

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The Parish Council scored 94%. This reflects that the process and controls in place in the parish are working well. They identified 5 recommendations for the council to consider, 3/5 were scored as high priority but were related to how we record certain items rather than incorrect processes.

The finance group has agreed a response to the Internal Auditor on each point raised which will be sent to the Internal Auditor following approval at this meeting. The finance group will review the status of the internal audit observations in 3 months time.

The resolution to approve the review of the internal audit report and the Parish Council response to be sent back to the Internal Auditor was proposed by RW and seconded by HD, all Councillors supported the resolution.

**Action:** Clerk to place all documents relating to the internal audit report onto the Parish Council website.

**Action:** Clerk to send the Parish Councils response to the Internal Audit observations back to the Internal Auditor.

**Action:** Finance group to review internal audit observations in September 2020.

**20.354.10 Resolution: To Approve Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019-2020 (HD)**

The Parish Council’s combined precept and other income for 2019/20 fell into the income/expenditure that exceeds £25,000-£6.5million bracket and therefore the annual accounts are subject to a limited assurance review by the external auditors and Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 Part 3 should be completed.

The allocation of the Parish Council reserves following the end of financial year 2019/20 has been amended to ensure there were no unallocated reserves, the remainder was placed under general reserves for village projects.

HD as the Parish Council Responsible Finance Officer confirmed he had already signed Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 on behalf of Weston on the Green Parish Council.

HD presented Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 to the Council for approval. The resolution to approve Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 of the AGAR form was proposed by HD and seconded by RW. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 was presented by HD to the Council for approval. The resolution to approve Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 of the AGAR form was proposed by HD and seconded by RW. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

The Chairman and clerk are to sign the AGAR form following this virtual meeting. The Responsible Financial Officer (HD) confirmed that the Period of Exercise of Public Rights would run from Monday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020 to Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

The signed AGAR form and required documents will be sent by email to the external auditor, Moore Stephens before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 and would also be published on the Parish Council website by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

**Action:** Chairman and clerk to sign AGAR form.

**Action:** Clerk to send off signed AGAR form and documents to the external auditors before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

**Action:** Clerk to ensure notice for the exercise of public rights is placed on village noticeboards and on the website.

**Action:** Clerk to upload all finance documents to website before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

**20.354.11 Resolution: To Approve Parish Council Donations Policy 2020-21 (RW)**

RW highlighted additional wording which has been added to the donations policy following discussion at the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 Parish Council meeting: “Initiatives supported must also accord with the Parish Council’s role as a government body, as outlined in its Standing Orders, and the Code of Conduct signed by all Councillors. For example, this would mean it is not permitted to support political endeavours.”

The resolution to approve the Parish Council Donations Policy 2020-21 was proposed by RW and seconded by HD, all Councillors supported the resolution.

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**Action:** Clerk to place the Parish Council Donations Policy 2020-21 onto the Parish Council website and highlight it in the next edition of the Village News.

**20.354.12 For Information:** Update on Bicester Foodbank drive in the village (DB/HD)

HD and DB provided an overview of the successful collection of food and £70 in cash which was donated to the Bicester Foodbank. There have been discussions about doing this again in the future but the Council are conscious of the Church's collection for Harvest Festival in the autumn so will hold off for now.

DB also highlighted that a volunteer is collecting bottles from residents in the village to take them to the bottle bank demonstrating the community efforts in the village presently.

**20.354.13 Resolution: To Approve** the following invoices for payment (HD)

HD requested approval of the following invoice detailed in the table below.

PC Ref	Payee	Purpose	Total payable incl VAT	Budget Line	Amount Remaining in 2020-21 Budget Line
136	Clerk (J Mullane)	Remainder of childrens mud kitchen toys	£47.94	Works-Playing Field/Childrens Garden	£100.00

An additional invoice dated 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020 for £108.00 for grass cutting from Oxford Edens, was received after the agenda was published. The Council were asked to approve this invoice to avoid late payment fees. The invoice will be submitted for formal notification and approval at the August Parish Council meeting.

The resolution to approve the invoices was proposed by HD and seconded by NM. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

**Action:** Clerk to update invoice log with approvals.

**Action:** Clerk to initiative request for payments from Councillors.

**Action:** Councillors to process online payment requests.

**20.354.14 For Discussion:** to discuss and agree recommendations from the Planning Group (HD)

HD highlighted the key items in the planning report.

#### **Building Works:**

#### **Decision Received**

**20/00517/F** - Lime Walk, Church Lane – Demolition and replacement of 2 storey 1960s side extension – **Footpath to be formally moved on map – No Issue**

#### **Awaiting Decision**

**20/00922/F** – 14 Westlands Avenue – Single storey front extension and garage conversion with associated internal and external works – **PC commented support**

**20/00763/F** – Manor Farm Bungalow, Northampton Road - Removal of condition 9 (occupation of site by caravan, motor caravan or tent) of 00/01162/F – **PC commented - Restrictions**

**20/01005/F & 20/01006/LB** Weston Manor Hotel Northampton Road - Oak orangery to rear of hotel and new roof on Rupert's Cottage – **CDC & Heritage now all over this – commented support**

*HD highlighted that this planning application has been withdrawn.*

**20/01017/LB** - Weston Manor Cottage Northampton Road - Refurbish and extend existing rear extension, alter fenestration and re-roof existing garden stores - (15/02090/LB) – **commented support**

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**20/01265/F** - Keepers Cover Church Lane - Proposed single storey residential extension. **CDC Officer:- J.Gale**

**Tree Works:**

**Approved / Completed**

**20/01234/TCA** – Stonehouse, Northampton Road – Tree was dead (now removed)

**20/01272/TCA** - The Moat, Northampton Road – Birch Fell – Approved

**New Application / Awaiting Decision – Case Officer Iain Osenton**

**20/01360/TCA** - Rose Cottage, Church Road- Remove Leylandi- in conservation area

**20/01425/TCA** – Mithian Cottage, Northampton Road – Remove Cherry Tree in back garden – in conservation area.

**20/01384/TPO** – The Manor Hotel, Northampton Road – Quite an extensive set of tree works – most seems sensible management, due to longer-term neglect. Any comments but otherwise happy to leave to CDC arboriculturalist team. The TPO covers lime trees on drive that are to have crown lifted and dead wood removed, which should aid preservation.

**Action:** HD/Clerk to send comments on planning applications to Cherwell District Council.

**20.354.15 For Information:** Works update including playground report (RSA)

RSA highlighted the key comments from the submitted playground report. Since the inspection by RSA on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020 the playground grass has been cut by Oxford Edens on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and RSA has replaced a number of bolt covers on the equipment.

RSA offered to arrange volunteers to do some maintenance work e.g. clean equipment, cut weeds at bottom of fencing ahead of the playground re-opening on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020. RSA also emptied the litter bins on the playing field and suggested some signs for litter bins highlighting: please put dog poo bags in the dog bins provided.

**Action:** HD to source signs for litter bins highlighting to please put dog poo bags in the dog bins provided.

RSA commented on some drug/drink activity on the playing field near the shed, the police have been notified.

The risk assessment for re-opening the playground was approved by Councillors on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. An additional comment will be added that the mud kitchen toys will not be placed back down in the spinney area for now. A resident has very kindly donated a café/house to be put in the spinney area for children to play with.

**Action:** Clerk to place safety signage at the park and on the Parish Council website.

The clerk also confirmed that the Rospa play inspection is scheduled to be conducted in July 2020, if that is not possible it will be August 2020.

**20.354.16 For Information:** Update on purchase of playing field and spinney. **Resolution: to Approve** the hiring of a solicitor from the tender list and **Resolution: to Approve** a gross offer price of £30,500 to the Duchy of Cornwall for the playing field and spinney land (RSA)

RSA presented the quotes he had received from solicitors for the purchase of the playing field and spinney. RSA highlighted the quote from Spratt Endicott (out of their Banbury office) as the most economic one. The quote from Spratt Endicott was for £500+VAT plus searches (the cost of which varied between £250 and £400).

The resolution to approve hiring of Spratt Endicott as the solicitor for the purchase of the playing field and spinney was proposed by RSA and seconded by HD, all Councillors supported the resolution.

**Action:** RSA to pass Council approved solicitor information onto the Duchy in order to proceed the purchase of the playing field and spinney.

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A summary of the process to apply for a Public Works Loan was provided by the clerk. The finance group will look at the process in further detail and report back to the Council.

**Action:** Finance group to investigate Public Works Loan and provide recommendation back to the Council.

RSA went on to recommend the gross offer price of £30,500 to pay the Duchy of Cornwall for the playing field and spinney land. The Duchy committed to paying a grant towards the damaged fencing of £500 which Nick Mould did agree could be offset against the purchase of the field, it would therefore equate to a net offer price of £30,000 for the land.

The resolution to approve the gross offer price of £30,500 to the Duchy of Cornwall for the playing field and spinney land was proposed by RSA and seconded by HD, all Councillors supported the resolution.

**Action:** RSA to confirm the Council's offer price for the purchase of the playing field/spinney to the Duchy.

**20.354.17 Resolution: To Approve** a proposal from Ardley Football Club to use the playing field for matches (RSA)

RSA presented a proposal from Ardley Football Club to use the playing field for junior matches (under 12s) during the 2020/21 football season for an annual pitch rental of £250, on a 3 year rolling agreement.

Smaller goals on wheels (to be locked up at the edge of the field) and toilet facilities would be provided by the football club; they would also look to gradually improve the facility and playing surface over time. Flags and other equipment could be stored in the shed. RSA highlighted there is work to do around the car park area including removal of chippings and hedge trimming.

Ardley FC are keen to get the local community of Weston on the Green involved with the club by getting local children involved in the junior teams, the clerk will liaise with the club on advertising. This proposal will provide the football club with an enhanced opportunity to expand the junior section of the club and the Council were very pleased to be able to support them.

The resolution to approve the proposal from Ardley Football Club of £250 annual pitch rental on a 3 year rolling agreement to use the playing field for matches was proposed by RSA and seconded by HD, all Councillors supported the resolution.

**Action:** Clerk to inform Ardley FC of the Council's acceptance of their offer.

**Action:** Clerk to obtain advertising information for Weston village children to join the club.

**20.354.18 Next Virtual Parish Council Meeting:** 5th August 2020, 7.30pm via Zoom

The meeting ended at 21.11

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