

MINUTES

For the meeting of Parish Council, held on Wednesday, 5th June 2019

Meeting Number 19.340

Public Participation Session

There was nothing to note from the public.

19.340.1 Apologies for absence

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

There were 5 members of the public present.

19.340.2 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.

19.340.3 Approval of the minutes

The minutes of the Annual Parish Council meeting on 1st May 2019 were discussed and approved with no changes required.

The minutes for the Annual Parish Council meeting on 1st May 2019 were then moved by DB and seconded by SD. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 1st May 2019 were discussed and approved with no changes required.

The minutes for the Parish Council meeting on 1st May 2019 were then moved by DB and seconded by NM. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

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

19.340.4 Chair's report

DB started her report by thanking the Parish Council for their excellent work as they balance their lives with their PC responsibilities, she highlighted that she knows it's not easy and at times the work is far too demanding.

Following a period of reflection on the resignation of two councillors there seems to be some common denominators that we can use as a 'take away' for the future. The themes appear to be:

- being IT savvy is a benefit
- an understanding of the time commitment
- a commitment to compliance to regulations and the type of accountability that holding public office implies.

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In our discussions around the village, could we bear in mind that these three things form a criterion for future members of the team.

Following a review of the Internal Audit, to be presented tonight, DB remarked that it's a pleasure that we have come such a long way in a few months. DB thanked the Finance team for the hours of work and the excellent product of those efforts.

DB went on to announce that Henry Donne has agreed to take on the role of Responsible Financial Officer for a period of time whilst we continue to shape the relationship between the Finance Team, the Clerk and the Bookkeeper. In July this team will report back to Council the formal structure and chain of communication that will go with our financial model.

MOTION: DB formally proposed that the Parish Council agree that Henry Donne be appointed Responsible Financial Officer of the Weston on the Green Parish Council.

It was seconded by RW and supported unanimously by the Council.

The Chair ended by saying our village and indeed this country owes so much to those who sacrificed their lives during the D Day invasion. On behalf of the Council DB acknowledged the sacrifice, those who gave their lives, others who gave their innocence and those who lost their loved ones.

19.340.5 Clerk's report

The Clerk highlighted the key points from her report.

Oak Tree, North Lane: The Clerk outlined the meeting with John Rawlings-Hall, Oxfordshire County Council Arboricultural Officer who came to investigate bark falling off the tree on Wednesday 29th May 2019. He confirmed one branch will be reduced in the next two months and a full inspection of the tree will be undertaken in the autumn.

Any work undertaken on the tree is to enhance the health and longevity of the tree and is also in the interest of health and safety. The Clerk will keep the Council and village informed of any further information received.

Action: Clerk to monitor any future works required on the Oak Tree and liaise with the village on potential works and health of the tree.

Village Gate Planters: all planters have now been filled and placed at the gates. The Parish Council would formally like to thank Julia White, Helen Price, Andy and Debbie Jones (The Chequers) and Susan Davies for tending the planters so beautifully.

Weston on the Green Airfield – Night Flying: Following a query by a resident the Parish Council contacted the RAF who confirmed there are no restrictions with regards to flying for a certain number of days in a month/week or at certain times. Operational requirement dictates the usage and then the weather determines when they can achieve this training.

They confirmed that if you are experiencing any disturbance, you can submit a flying complaint to the following email address _SWK-LowFlying@mod.gov.uk

This can also be found on the website.

Assets of Community Value: The Playing Field and Spinney has been accepted as an Asset of Community Value. Remaining sites to be progressed.

Dog Bin Signs: 4 dog bin signs with 'Please keep your dog on a lead' have been purchased and placed on the dog bins, which have also been cleaned.

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Redundant Road Signs: Councillor Ruth Whitfield has provided a list of broken or redundant signs and poles in the village. This has been sent to the Community team at OCC who will investigate fixing the issues.

19.340.6 For Information: Review of Internal Auditors report (RW)

RW provided a summary of the response to the Internal Auditors report, which was received by Weston on the Green Parish Council on 3rd June 2019, which analyses the processes of the Parish Council.

The auditors assess the Parish Council against a series of 13 categories, 4 of these categories are not applicable for this council. Following this assessment, the auditors then make a series of observations, which enable the Parish Council to refine details of their due process.

The Parish Council scored Green in 8 out of 9 of the categories assessed. This reflects that the process and controls in place in the Council are working well. They scored 1 of the 9 categories as red. This red was noted because the PC had not undertaken assessment and sign off on a Bank Reconciliation on a quarterly basis over the financial year.

On the overview of observations, the material point raised by the auditor was to note that the Council was proposing to set up PAYE for the new clerk. It urged the Council to action this.

The auditors also made a series of more detailed points associated with protocol to which the Finance Group has considered and accepted. These are minor but important aspects of protocol and will be followed when we next undertake these sections of the process.

RW went on to highlight the proposed next steps:

Work has already started to confirm the quarterly reporting format that our Bookkeeper will deliver to the Finance Group for review, prior to approval at full council. This quarterly report will include a bank reconciliation.

Actions are underway to follow up on the set up of PAYE with the Bookkeeper, this will be on the agenda for the July Finance Group meeting to check on progress.

The Clerk and Finance lead are aware of the points of protocol highlighted by the internal auditors and will ensure these are actioned accordingly.

The Finance Group has agreed a response to the Internal Auditor on each point raised.

HD commented that the failed red category was based on a process point and highlighted that there was nothing wrong with the figures supplied. He went on to add that last year the Council failed 7 of the 9 categories, therefore this is a vast improvement and RW should be thanked for all her hard work in making the Council more compliant.

RW proposed that the Parish Council supports the response to the Internal Audit report and agrees that the Parish Council's response be sent back to the Internal Auditor. It was seconded by HD and supported unanimously by the Council.

Action: Finance lead to place follow up on the set up of PAYE on the agenda for the July Finance Group meeting.

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

19.340.7 Resolution: To Approve Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2018/19 (RW)

RW presented the amended accounts for the financial year 2018/2019 to the Council.

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The resolution to approve the Parish Councils Financial Reports for 2018/2019 was proposed by RW and seconded by HD. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

HD as the Parish Council Responsible Finance Officer signed Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2018/19 on behalf of Weston on the Green Parish Council.

Smaller authorities where the higher of gross annual income or gross annual expenditure does not exceed £25,000 and that meet the qualifying criteria as set out in the Certificate of Exemption are able to declare themselves exempt from sending the completed Annual Governance and Accountability Return to the external auditor for a limited assurance review provided the authority completes:

- Certificate of Exemption and returns a copy to the external auditor
- The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (Part 2)

It was proposed that Weston on the Green Parish Council would certify itself as exempt.

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 was presented by RW to the Council for approval.

The resolution to approve Section One – Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 of the AGAR form was proposed by RW and seconded by HD. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

The document was duly signed by the Chairman (DB) and Clerk.

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2018/19 was presented by RW to the Council for approval.

The resolution to approve Section Two – Accounting Statements 2018/19 of the AGAR form was proposed by RW and seconded by HD. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

The document was duly signed by the Chairman (DB).

The Responsible Financial Officer (HD) confirmed that the Period of Exercise of Public Rights would run from 10 June 2019 to 19 July 2019.

The resolution to approve the Certificate of Exemption - AGAR 2018/19 Part 2 was proposed by RW and seconded by HD. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

The document was then signed by the Responsible Financial Officer (HD) and Chairman (DB).

The Certificate of Exemption will be sent by email to the external auditor, Moore Stephens.

The Council confirmed that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2018/19, Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement, Section 2 - Accounting Statements, analysis of variances, bank reconciliation, Certificate of Exemption and the period for the exercise of public rights will all be placed on the Parish Council website by 1st July 2019.

Action: Clerk to send off signed Certificate of Exemption to External Auditors before 1st July 2019.

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.

Action: Clerk to inform the Council on any further information from External Auditor.

19.340.8 Resolution: To Approve Terms of Reference for Advisory Groups (RW)

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RW confirmed that a review and challenge of the Terms of Reference for Advisory Groups has been undertaken by the lead of each group.

There has been no material change aside from the finance group and the terms of reference has been reviewed as part of the end year process.

The resolution to approve Terms of Reference for Advisory Groups was proposed by RW and seconded by NM. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

19.340.9 Resolution: To Approve Email Policy and provide information on email accounts (Clerk)

The clerk highlighted the introduction of an email policy which all councillors are required to indicate an acceptance of on an annual basis.

The clerk drew particular attention to the security sections including if Councillors suspect there has been a breach in their email or a virus, they should please contact the clerk. If they receive a hoax email, they need to double delete them from their inbox and deleted items.

The backup policy at the end of the report regarding the requirement to download a PST file backup of the emails to save on Dropbox annually was noted.

The resolution to approve the email policy was proposed by RSA and seconded by SD. It was supported unanimously by the Council.

Action: Clerk to email new email information and logins to Councillors.

Action: Clerk to sign and date email policy and file.

Action: Clerk to create folder on Dropbox for email backup.

19.340.10 For Information: Village feedback on North Lane duck pond, chicken farm smell, Old Police Station road and Westlands Avenue to Village Hall footpath (DB)

DB mentioned that there have been a number of issues in the village recently which have been brought to the attention of the Parish Council. DB encourages a culture where residents can highlight concerns and feel that they are listened to and supported by the Parish Council.

1. **State of the Duck Pond** – there is concern that the pond is overrun by reeds and that the water will soon be unfit to sustain life.

SD commented that the pond has been dredged twice before to remove silt and rushes. It is not a lined pond which is why it dries up in the summer.

It was also reported that there are moorhens with chicks on the pond therefore the Council have not been able to do any work on the pond previously and especially in spring time due to nesting.

The question is how to sustain water in the pond over the summer period. In the past a hose has periodically been put in by the Fire Service (as they must empty their tanks every so often) so that is a potential option if required.

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NM suggested a strategy of de-silting the pond, removing the bull rushes and refilling with water.

It was noted that John Miller helped last time work on the pond was required so perhaps he can be approached again. RSA will ask whether the farmer on the opposite side of B430 would like to take any more silt after receiving the contents of the Oak Tree pond.

There are also fish in the pond so they would need to be removed prior to any dredging work.

RSA suggested this was work for the autumn months so will be revisited at that time.

Action: Work on North Lane pond to be further investigated in the Autumn (including RSA seeing if farmer would take more silt).

- 2. **Chicken Smell** – we’ve had a letter of serious concern by a resident who lives by The Chequers. The smell is reported as being invasive and nearly constant.

A resident at the meeting provided a list to the Council with additional dates when they could smell the chicken farm.

The clerk mentioned that she would contact the Environment Agency to check what progress has been made by them and if there is any further information to share. The clerk will report back to the council at the next meeting and inform the concerned residents of any further information.

Action: Clerk to contact the Environment Agency to check what progress has been made and inform the concerned residents of any further information.

- 3. **Land behind Guernsey Cottage** - we’ve had a query about the status of the land bought by Councillor Stafford-Allen – does Section 52 apply?

RSA responded by confirming that s52 has been superseded by s106 and applied to the Bartlett's building development and not the land. The land is agricultural land and we intend to devote it to wildlife. You are not allowed to mow agricultural land but there are reportedly fewer restrictions than RSA originally thought. RSA confirmed he is abiding by agricultural land rules.

- 4. **Westland Avenue path to the Village Hall** – the state of the path is still not acceptable.

NM commented that he had contacted OCC and raised his concerns. He had received an email back from OCC who considered the footpath was an 'acceptable and safe standard'.

DB queried whether we could try and obtain additional grant money from OCC to fund additional works?

DB raised her concerns that it is a key link for residents to walk to the shop or village hall from Westlands Avenue and she did not feel it was very safe.

RSA suggested the Council could request the person who laid the Church path to come and review the footpath to assess what additional works could be undertaken.

Action: RSA to contact person who laid the Church footpath to see if he will come and assess Westlands Avenue to Village Hall footpath.

- 5. **Old Police Station Road** –what is the status of any repairs – potholes are growing.

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NM confirmed he has been chasing Chris Grain at OCC to find a solution. It has been commented that unfortunately whilst the surface is uneven none of the potholes are of a size that warrant fixing.

Action: NM will contact Chris Grain again.

6. **Transport Advisory Group** – no report since the last meeting and the Chair confirmed she will follow up.
7. **Grass Cutting**

Councillors want to get a strategy in place over which areas are mowed by volunteers and which by OCC, particularly regarding visibility issues on Northampton Road.

It was agreed that wildflowers on the verges is a lovely sight and what a rural village should include.

The Council would also like to formally thank The Chequers for all the work they undertake at their end of the village, it is always immaculately kept and makes a lovely welcome for visitors to the village.

Action: Council will write to The Chequers to thank them for caring for areas of village so well.

19.340.11 For Information: Update on School Field (DB)

DB confirmed there was nothing currently to report and more information should be available at the next Parish Council meeting.

RSA confirmed that the School Field has been mowed.

19.340.12 For Discussion: Review of Thames Water work and communication (DB)

DB confirmed that she has been in touch with Yasemin at the Weston Pantry over her claim with Thames Water.

Several issues are still outstanding in the village as a result of the Thames Water works and DB queried if it is worth sending an overview letter to highlight them to Thames Water.

It was agreed this was a good option.

Action: Clerk to contact Thames Water to request someone to come out and discuss the remaining issues with the Council.

19.340.13 Resolution: To approve the following invoices.

The clerk requested approval of the following invoices detailed in the table below.

Payee	Purpose	Total payable incl VAT
Clerk – J Mullane	Picnic Tables x2 (Benchmark UK)	£576.00
Clerk – J Mullane	Village gate planters x3 (Amazon)	£188.85
Clerk – J Mullane	Village gate planter plants (Bunkers Hill)	£46.07

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Clerk – J Mullane	Village gate planter topsoil (AWBS)	£69.98
Clerk – J Mullane	Village gate planter weed stop lining & compost (Bicester Avenue Garden Centre)	£28.97
Clerk – J Mullane	Dog bins signs x4 (Shop4yoursigns.co.uk)	£15.48
Community First	Annual Community First Subscription	£40.00
Oxford Green Belt Network	Annual Oxford Green Belt Network Subscription	£15.00
Weston on the Green Village Hall	Village Hall hire (May-August)	£60.00
123 Connect	Hosting Parish Council website for 1 year (2019/20)	£118.80

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

Action: Clerk to update invoice log with approvals.

Action: Clerk to update Transparency log of invoices in excess of £100 and add to PC website.

Action: Clerk to initiative request for payments from councillors.

Action: Councillors to process online payment requests.

19.340.14 For Discussion: to discuss and agree other recommendations from the Planning Group (HD)

HD highlighted the key changes in the planning report from the previous May Parish Council meeting:

Decision Received

19/00086/TCA - G2 x 13 Yew trees - Remove | The Moat Northampton Road

PC Commented – CDC approved, lack of public amenity

19/00101/TCA | T1 x Horse chestnut with an infection of phytophthora - Dismantle and remove. G1 x 2 no Western Red Cedars - Dismantle due to them being planted in the wrong location; the client wishes to reinstate the grass which is not possible while they remain in place. | Home Farm House Church Lane

PC commented – seems Appropriate arboriculture management

Awaiting Decision

18/02066/F | Demolition of redundant concrete barn and erection of 4 dwellings with associated access and amenity | Southfield Farm, North Lane

PC commented - Expecting approval

18/02089/F | - Change of use to office space and the conference room to be used as light manufacturing of high-tech mobile phones - Coach House at Weston Manor Hotel

PC Commented 30/1/19 – Still no news

19/00025/DISC | Discharge of Conditions 3 (tile sample), 4 (stone sample), 5 (timber sample), 6 (landscaping), 8 (doors and windows), 9 (architectural detailing), 10 (enclosures), 11 (parking and manoeuvring areas) and 12 (means of access) of 18/01251/F | Sycamore House, Shepherds Close

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PC commented on Condition 11 (parking and manoeuvring) & 12 (means of access) 13.3.19 - Still awaiting update (chased)

18/01644/F Shepherds Close Planning Appeal made having been turned down for conversion of barn to one-bedroom house on site

This appeal has now been formally rejected 

19/00546/TPO | Horse Chestnut T1 - Fell to near ground level; Horse Chestnut T2 - Reduce lateral by 6m retaining 1 secondary branch and the defect for habitat value; Horse Chestnut T3 - Crown reduce by approximately 4m, removing no more than 6m from any one branch to reduce the sail area and decrease the likelihood of failure of the upper canopy on to the adjacent road, reduce to near previous points retaining the smaller diameter branches - subject to TPO 06/75 | **The Old Vicarage Mill Lane**

PC commented – seems Appropriate arboriculture management

19/00596/OUT | Residential development of up to 18 dwellings with associated access, internal roads, car parking, public open space, landscaping, drainage and other associated infrastructure. | **Land North of Southfield Farm North Lane**

PC commented

HD thanked the Council for their help in developing the Parish Council reply to the Southfield Farm application.

Stagecoach submitted a well reasoned document on the development including commenting that the bus service will not be coming back to Weston on the Green and that Weston shouldn't be classified as a category A village.

HD has forwarded the document onto the Weston Front 2 group.

New Applications

19/00798/F | Installation of two bay oak framed car port | Willow Cottage Church Road

Please review application and any comments to HD

HD commented that the application is in line with other 2 bay wood car ports and no neighbour has bought anything to the Parish Council's attention. The scheme doesn't change the setting in the village so he proposed that is what should be noted.

RW raised a query about the dimensions as a resident commented to her that they thought it looked tall. HD said he will check the height of the scheme.

Action: HD to check on height of Willow Cottage scheme prior to reporting back to CDC.

19/00137/TCA | T1, T2 x Ash, T3 x Birch - Fell. | The Moat Northampton Road

HD commented that the sickly ash is viewable from the road but there are no other issues.

Ongoing Planning issues

Southfield Farm / Land north of Oak View Phase 1 - (see also 19/00596/OUT)

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PC (Cllr Mullane) is liaising / working with the Owner / OCC / CDC over the issues around Oak Tree pond and footpath access, which is progressing.

19.340.15 For Information: to receive an update on the Works Group (RSA)

RSA provided his monthly playground report. The equipment and playground were inspected on 5th June 2019 and the general appearance is good.

There are some actions, none of which is classed as major and requiring the closure of the playground.

ROSPA inspection of playground has been booked for July.

The pitch has been mowed and RSA is looking for additional volunteers to help with the mowing.

The two picnic tables have been delivered, assembled and positioned in the picnic area. The Parish Council would like to thank John Miller again who supplied a couple of bits of metal for ground anchors and RSA who purchased some chain and two padlocks.

RSA also requested approval for placing a waste bin there, which he already has. All Councillors agreed this was a good idea.

RSA also mentioned discussing the playing field loan and purchase at the next PC meeting. It was agreed that the Finance Advisory Group would assess the scheme prior to it going on a full PC agenda.

Action: Finance advisory group to investigate option of obtaining a Public Works Loan in order to purchase the playing field and spinney.

RSA also requested approval from the Council to buy rabbit netting for the allotments which may cost between £40-50, this was granted by the Council as it was for less than £100 which is the limit previously agreed.

Action: Clerk to contact Dalcour Maclaren to see if they would consider another works day in the village.

19.340.16 For Information: to receive an update on the Traffic Group (NM)

NM informed the Council that the Traffic Advisory Group had met with Councillor Carmen Griffiths and Mike Wasley from OCC.

This was a very productive meeting and they are now working on a list of priorities to bring together and present at a public village meeting.

NM also confirmed there are no plans to put a footpath down Church Lane/Road.

The main considerations include:

- pinch point on Bletchingdon Road/Church Lane
- Stocks junction - whilst it can't be reworked the junction can be altered slightly to help prevent speeding
- Flashing 20-mile signs
- Footpath direction options: through Churchyard and using Oxford Way footpath to back of playing field
- Dropped kerbs to aid crossing from next to Dower House to the village shop
- Church Close curb bring out to soft pinch point

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There are obviously costs associated with all these measures alongside the cost of getting electricity to a pinch point.

SD queried if it could be solar powered. NM responded that's it's a possibility but Mike Wasley said it was not their preferred option due to the tree canopy there so it may not get enough light but could look at moving solar panel further away.

The Traffic Group will discuss options further and then a date will be set for a whole village meeting.

Action: NM to set date for village meeting to discuss traffic calming options.

19.340.17 For Information: to receive an update on the Neighbourhood Plan (DB)

DB confirmed there was no news from the Examiner and will update the Council when receive anything further.

19.340.18 Update on Strategy to Recruit new Council Members (SD)

SD reported that she had an action to create a strategy to attract new people to the Council to fill the two vacancies.

She highlighted that recruitment is a problem that Parish Councils in the whole country are facing and highlighted the following issues:

- Perception of Parish Councils being inept, amateur and inefficient
- Councillors are unpaid volunteers
- Parish Councils have no power and no impact beyond dog bins
- Only those who have time and independent financial support can afford to do it

We have published a call for candidates in the village news and on the website and need to approach younger members of the village perhaps via social media.

SD queried if the Council is happy with the current number of Councillors as it is not obliged to fill the vacancies.

DB suggested that it would be good to have a couple of months to see the effect of the adverts and to talk to some more people including those at the traffic event.

HD suggested the Council discuss this topic again at the September Parish Council meeting.

Action: Clerk to put HR discussion on September Parish Council meeting agenda.

19.340.19 Public Participation

A resident commented on the location of the footpath (adjacent to Shepherds Close) in the School Field and that in sections it was too close to houses and would prefer it to be straight.

HD suggested talking to Graham Barnett (footpath warden) and checking where footpath should be located on OS maps.

Action: HD to speak to Graham Barnett (footpath warden) to discuss location of School Field footpath and feedback to the village at a future PC meeting.

19.340.20 Date of next Parish Council meeting: 3rd July 2019

The meeting closed at 9.25

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