

MINUTES OF WITHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING Held on Wednesday 25th January 2023 at the Village Hall
Withington, at 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Cllr Glenys Webb, Cllr David Miles Cllr Catherine Boyce, Cllr Nicky Lowe, Cllr Alex Barrell, Cllr David Craig, County Cllr Paul Hodgkinson 2 members of the public, and the Clerk/RFO.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Bruno Brenninkmeijer and District Councillor Robin Hughes
2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA. Cllr Glenys Webb – village hall request for additional funds. Item ** on the agenda.**
3. **MINUTES of the Meetings** held on the 25th January 2023 were circulated prior to the meeting to Councillor's; These were signed by the Chairman.

Progress report and matters arising on the meeting held: 25th January 2023

4. Matters Arising

Willowside Farm stables – The Clerk has written to Jane Bruce who stated that there are no foundations, and it is a movable structure. The Council discussed this and decided the council are not happy with this response. It was agreed that there are stables down there and they have not been moved for 28 days. The Clerk is to raise the following issues with Mr and Mrs Bruce again. To find out if the stables have been in place for more than 28 days - What are the plans concerning these stables. - For Mr and Mrs Bruce to clarify what the digging is for. **Response received** *Willowside Farm has a history of horses and stabling going back century's. The stables are on skids and movable, but they can hardly be seen as we went to the expense of clearing top soil to reduce height to allay neighbourly concerns.* **25/01/2022 update** The horse stables are still in the same position. It cuts the light out completely of two peoples gardens in Harnham Lane that they back onto. Also, water tap has been installed for the horses and it was felt the stables are obtrusive in that position. The clerk said she has sent Mrs Bruce at least two e-mails regarding the Parish Councils concerns and has not received any further response to the second e-mail. It was agreed to ask the CDC enforcement officer to come and have a look at them. The stables are on Willow side land behind Harnham lane. They are on runners and are supposed to be moveable but they have not moved.

It was also requested that the Parish Council also ask the Enforcement Officer to look at the land off Cassey Compton road and the Barn which is owned by Willow side Farm to stable horses. The history of the site is that they have twice been refused permission to put loose boxes for horses in the barn they erected. It has been reported by one of the Councillors that there were 12 horses stabled up there. So there must be some loose boxes in there which do not have permission.

The 2000 Trees festival - The Clerk has written to the Licencing team at CDC for information on the current licence details as yet there has been no response. This will included questions raised on the numbers of 15,000 at the 2022 event. The Parish council were not aware that increased numbers had been passed by CDC. The Clerk will ask for a copy of the licence from last year so that the PC can start a discussion for 2023. The Parish Council will ask - the dates these numbers were agreed and information about the additional dates included so that they can respond to queries from members of the public. **25/01/2023** the Licencing officer has been in touch and said that notification was sent out to the Parish

council on the extension of the licence in April 2020 as no response was received they took that as no objection. It was pointed out that we were in COVID lock down at that point and the Parish Council was not meeting. The licence has been extended to a 3 day event plus weekends and is for 15,000 people. The Parish Council are very unhappy about the response from CDC and have asked the Clerk to respond to the licencing officer on that point. It also states in the licence that there will be post event meetings to take place this has not happened, and the fields opposite not owned by the event organisers were used illegally for camping in the middle of harvest. The clerk to raise again with the licencing department.

Defibrillator for Foxcote

Cllr Boyce updated that Foxcote have been successful in raising the money for the Defib and it was agreed that the Parish council will include in the Budget for next year some fund to help with the upkeep of the defib. (Pads etc).

Large Tree at Compton Rise – over hanging front garden residents asked that arrangement is made to cut back the tree – It was agreed that this is a Bromford issue . Cllr Mills updated that he has been in touch with Bromford about the tree and they have been to look at it.

5. Planning application and updates

Updates:

New Planning applications

Ballingers Farm Withington Cheltenham

To fell to ground level and remove 5 spruce trees (4 in paddock and 1 in driveway)

Manor Hall Chedworth Road Withington Cheltenham

Pinus sylvestris, 90% dead, clear fell & removal grind out stump. T1836- Pinus sylvestris, Dead tree adjacent electric sub station. Fell 1953- Prunus laurcerasus- remove major leader. T1959- Psuedotsuga menzesii, Tree is close to property entrance, fell.

23/00088/FUL Meadowside (Land Adjacent to Willowside Farm) – Withington amendment to design of permission.

22/03887/FUL Withington House - Application was to move entrance, Undecided.

6. Budget Planning and Precept for 2023

The additional items to be included in this year's budget were discussed and included: Website, Microsoft exchange, Foxcote defib donation, Repairs, Play area maintenance and subsequently the safety equipment report has highlighted some maintenance to this area.

Precept discussions - history of the reserves was discussed. Some years ago, they were built up to double what is an ideal level. It was agreed that the most effective level should be between ½ and 1 years expenditure, the decision was taken to not increase council tax so that the costs would catch up to this level. They have now caught up but they need to start being increased as currently they are too low. On going costs are increasing and the suggested plan is to increase above inflation for the next few years for at least the next 3 years to allow the budget to reach parity. It was agreed that it is important to communicate

to the village the importance of this increase and the risk to the village if the reserves are allowed to fall lower than they currently are. The increase will benefit the village and allow the Parish Council to maintain grass cutting, maintenance and upgrading the website for everyone's benefit.

Suggested £400 increase which is around 8% increase – Agreed.

7. Increase to Donation to the village hall (letter) (carried over from the last meeting)

Cllr Webb left the room for this item to be discussed. A Letter has been received by the Parish Council from the Trustees of the Withington Village Hall. Setting out that for the last 15 years the PC has supported the Village Hall with donations of £750 per annum which covers a smaller proportion of our costs each year as the years have gone on. COVID has not helped the situation leading to a reduced utilisation of the hall and reduced income (e.g. the Withington Players Drama Group has folded). This, in turn, has led to a loss in revenue. Due to the church being in dire need of funds to repair its failing roof, the Village Hall Committee has shared its fundraising activities to help the church in the last couple of years. Annual costs are escalating due to electricity without additional support there may come a point when they will be forced to close.

The PC have been asked to consider increasing the level of support it provides for the 2023/24 year onwards.

Questions Raised – A) what happened to the excess money raised for the Platinum jubilee money as it has been suggested the benefactors where going to give the excess to the village hall –(when Cllr Webb returned she was asked this – she responded that the village hall have received £1199.52. This was instead of holding the annual fete and was made up of part of the proceeds on the day (raffle and silent auction) The village hall has not received any money from the sponsors.

B) COVID has now finished have bookings to the village hall now increased. It was updated that they have lost their main groups through disbanding (Drama) and the only income that they have is from our donation and the School who use it.

C) What efforts have been made to raise money through lottery grants or raising money. It was update that they normally have a fete but that did not happen last year. There is also going to be open gardens in 2023 and so the fete will not go ahead either. Cllr Boyce said it is up to the whole community to look for small grants that can be used but they may not realise the state they are in. Cllr Webb said that they now urgently need the roof to be repaired the worst case scenario is that it will cost £12,000.

Discussion – Cllr Brenninkmeijer had asked between meetings what is the fee for the Parish Council using the village hall and what else is the fee going to be used for. Any increase will have to be reflected in an increase in precept to the village.

It was updated that some time ago it was suggested that the Parish Council could claim back any expenditure the village hall makes as the Parish Council can claim back VAT and the village hall cannot. This could benefit them and should be looked at. The Parish Council decided that they would like to see the business plan and budget for the village hall for 2023/24 so that they know what the increase will be used for and what the Parish Council are contributing to.

Action the Clerk will write to them and ask the question before any decision is made.

8. Play Area Inspection

The Parish council have received a 24 page report from the play area inspection this was discussed. Most things highlighted on the list of actions are low risk but it was agreed we need to look at signage. It was proposed that a working party should be formed to look at the area when the weather is better and tackle jobs which have been highlighted such as looking at the bird deterrents, treating the moss and the rust in areas. Rough edges on woodwork areas may need sanding. A date to be agreed.

9. Foxcote Junction

There has been no update to this, Cllr Boyce asked Cllr Hodgkinson if he could raise this with highways. Cllr Hodgkinson said it is on their list to look at but that it is a long and challenging list.

10. Finance

The Clerk has received information from GAPTC and NALC for the 2022/23 pay increase. This equates to £1.00 per hour raising the salary from £11.50 to £12.50 per hour this was agreed.

Cheques were raised for the following:

Wickmedia Domain – Invoice £22.56
Clerks Salary – October November 22 - £395.60
HMRC - £378.40 for arrears and pay to date
David Craig for the Football nets £171.24
Play Area inspection report £120.00.

Cllr Alex Barrell signed the finance reconciliation sheet.

11. Update County Councillor P Hodgkinson

Pot holes still very bad on some roads. There is a page for highways reporting on the GCC website pin point location do then come relatively quickly key back lanes they look at main road but don't pick up those on the back lanes so important to report those. If not being fixed let Cllr Hodgkinson know and he will chase highways.

It is **budget setting** time and this will be set by GCC in February. The ruling party are proposing that there is a Council Tax increase of 5% and it is most likely it will be agreed.

A17 Missing Link – work is starting at the Air Balloon they are already on site – full construction will start in September and it should take about 3 years.. They are keeping the existing road open so you will not notice too much for a while.

Cllr Webb has been asked to raise if highways has any policy on members of the public putting large stones on their drives to stop depends complain no pavements walk through village stop on verge. Edge of verge n one to step off who owns it Highways own the first few meters then it belongs to the home owner. Anything can be done Cllr Hodgkinson

suggested it is reported on line when zoom in on location believe highways look at it. It was updated that the home owners are fairly new to the village and have just copied the same as a house further down the road. Cllr Hodgkinson said that in the first instance it may be better to have an informal conversation with the home owner before going to highways.

Cllr Webb also raised that the village sign has been damaged as you come into the village from the north road and who is this reported to. Cllr Hodgkinson said he thought that village signs are for highways and to use the reporting tool.

Cllr Webb said that there is also a problem with large vehicles still strig to get around the road by the Mill Inn. A low loader with a digger on tried and not taking any notice of the sign that says not suitable for large vehicles this was discussed as that sign is by the church and that may be too late for the lorry to turn around at that point. It was agreed we need better signage – Cllr Hodgkinson will take that back to highways.

12. Update for District Councillor Robin Hughes

No update as Cllr Hughes did not attend.

13. Correspondence

Notification of roads which are expected to be closed and restricted on a rolling programme commencing 1st February 2023 it is anticipated all works will be completed by 31st March 2023. – Chapel Cottage – Box Cottage, Greenfield, Foxcote for 32 meters.

E-mail from a Mr Philip Malandrinis enquiring how he can be buried in Withington Churchyard. The Chairman took the e-mail to pass on the information and the clerk will respond back that he will need to contact the Church and the vicar in this matter.

Cotswolds Neighbourhood Watch Association Formation - message sent, asking if the village would like to form a group. It was updated that some time ago there had been a meeting to form a group but the founder had since left the village. It was suggested that the village what's app group should be used to ask for volunteers to look at restarting the group. There is now an initiative, currently led by Duncan McGaw, and a network of Cotswold Neighbourhood Watch coordinators.

14. Any Other Business

NL updated on the water main plans they have received plans from Thames Water and they are looking at starting the work on private land in March with a rolling 8 month programme.

Update on the website James Mander would like some more photos. No timescales as yet.

15. Date of the next meetings:

10th May 2023 (AGM)