

MINUTES OF WITHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING Held on Wednesday 15th March 2023 at the Village Hall Withington,
at 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Cllr Glenys Webb, Cllr David Miles Cllr David Craig, Cllr Bruno Brenninkmeijer and 25 members of the public, and the Clerk/RFO.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr Catherine Boyce, Cllr Nicky Lowe, Cllr Alex Barrell, County Cllr Paul Hodgkinson and District Councillor Robin Hughes
2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.** Cllr Brenninkmeijer on 23/00694/FUL Retention of two stables (Retrospective) at Willowside Farm. Cllr Webb – Village Hall Committee
3. **MINUTES of the Meetings** held on the 25th January 2023 were circulated prior to the meeting to Councillor's

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

4. Matters Arising

Willowside Farm stables (on the agenda)

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. **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 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.

Large Tree at Compton Rise (no update)

Increase to Donation to the village hall (letter) (carried over from the meeting November 22 (on the agenda)

5. Planning application and updates

Updates:

23/00694/FUL retention of two stables (retrospective) at Willowside Farm Withington
Voted to object to the current location: No problem to them keeping horses in that field but there is objection to where the stables are currently sited.

- Impact on Conservation Area
- Privacy light and noise

Comments from Withington Parish Council – Object to the planning

Object - The stables are currently sited against the boundary fence of private housing, The Parish Council feel that they are too close, the smell from the horses is unacceptable.

Whilst the foundations were being built an elderly couple living in one of the properties were very upset and contacted the Parish Council who wrote twice to the applicant to ask what they were doing. They were specifically asked if the structure was movable the application responded that:

"There are no foundations and it is a movable structure". Willowside Farm has a history of horses and stabling going back centuries. 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"

The Parish Council noted that Heavy machinery was used to dig out foundations, no communications were made with the neighbour's that this would be going ahead and that large machinery would be digging so close to their gardens. They were upset by the noise and the machinery just appearing.

Although the applicant stated that they were movable structures, they were not moved from the time they were built and it is requested that they are moved to another part of the field this should be easily achieved if they are on movable skids as the applicant has stated in their e-mail the Parish Council. They have shown disregard to any of the neighbouring properties along that field.

Material planning considerations that need to be taken into account include:
Overlooking/loss of privacy - to people whose gardens are very close to the stables.
Loss of daylight/Sunlight or overshadowing - to all neighbours along that part of the field
Effect on neighbours' daylight, sunlight or privacy - Smell from the horses and the noise.

23/00603/PLP Land south off Clevely Cottage Harnham Lane

- Design
- Highway access and parking
- Impact on Conservation Area
- Impact on Listed Building
- Over development
- Privacy light and noise
- Trees and landscaping

Objection - Comments from Withington Parish Council

It has been reported that the public right of way has already been moved - Parish Council observed that the applicant should have applied to move the footpath including a gate on the land the PIP relates to. The path has been moved from the middle of the proposed site to the left of the site which is very near the neighbours' cottage and effects the privacy at Harnham Cottage. (Withington PC will ask Rights of way Glos Highways to look at this as a separate action, the footpath has gone from a broad path to a narrow alleyway) No consultation was undertaken with nearby houses, or GCC to our knowledge the work was just undertaken by the land owner and the new route is indicated in the PIP plans.

Land on the proposed sit is boggy and currently slopes and floods regularly at the bottom of the field. Concern if it is built on this will cause yet more problems, especially if there are hard surfaces the water will not soak away as is currently the case. Run off hard surfaces will not soak away into the filed but flood the field.

Harnham cottages are currently built on clay without foundations due to their age - If the proposal goes ahead, it will change the water table and effect the soil density which will affect the foundations of neighbouring properties.

Environmental impact -

Will be built below the build line.

Set a precedent for further buildings on the land behind Harnham Lane

Right to a view in the AONB will affect all houses along that part of the lane

Material planning considerations that need to be taken into account include:

Overlooking/loss of privacy - to all neighbours

Loss of daylight/Sunlight or overshadowing - to all neighbouring cottages.

Scale and dominance - too large for the site

Layout and density of buildings - parking issues,

Appearance and design of development - not in keeping with the frontage of Harnham Lane.

Traffic and parking issues along that road - currently difficult all along the lane which will increase issues.

PIP includes 3 parking spaces for each house this will cause problems turning into the property from the road, parking up and exiting. The proposed site is proposed on the narrowest part of Harnham Lane, and it will be very difficult for large vehicles to get down to the site if construction commences.

Drainage and Flood risk - the field floods regularly

Impact on character or appearance of area - Any new build would be incongruous with the surrounding historical cottages and orchard layout which still remains. The cottages front directly onto the field and oversee a 20 ft ancient carriageway (coffin way)

Effect on listed building and conservation area - currently a view onto the church will be lost. - Coffin Way - is of intrinsic importance to the village and visitors as an historical and rare feature. This may be tied to the AONB.

Effect on trees and wildlife/nature conservation - Glos Wildlife trust has visited this area as a snake was found at one of the cottages as it is a perfect habitat for such species. Also, great crested newts are around the lane and in gardens on the lane currently.

Economic impact and sustainability - Some time ago an affordable housing application was put in and the demand showed that 1 and 2 bedroom houses are needed in the village not more developments of larger housing not helping the village in any way but putting nothing but problems in that area.

Effect on neighbours' daylight, sunlight or privacy - already mentioned lane narrows at this point. Parking for new housing.

Effect on wildlife, listed buildings including neighbouring properties trees - catastrophic.

23/00491/FUL 3 The Farthings Withington

Comments from Withington Parish council – In favour

The Parish Council discussed the planning application. This is an extension to the rear of the property and out over the garage. The majority of the extension is at the rear of the property and not visible from the front. There was a question about the window with a balcony the neighbour had no problem with that. There were no other questions raised. The Parish Council voted in favour.

6. Discussion with Debbie Campbell – River Walk report

Debbie Campbell (Windrush Project Officer) came to the meeting to talk through the report the rivers trust had produced. She said that since Covid more people are using the outdoors for recreation and are taking more notice of changes in habitats and the state of the rivers.

The report which the rivers trust produced last year, highlighted various locations between the Andoversford Sewerage Treatment Plant (STW) to a point downstream of the Withington STW.

The river in this area should be in pristine condition, clear water, with good marginal, good aquatic weed growth and instream habitat, However, this was not the case, and a number of serious issues were identified during the day the report was researched. There was a small area below the stone bridge where habitat was acceptable with diverse flow and Water Buttercup, However, further downstream of the stone bridge sewerage foam was noted.

Other than that small area habitat was degraded with increased turbidity. Downstream of the STW discharge point, the river was heavily overshadowed. The riverbank trees had been flailed with the brash pushed into the river. In addition, a few metres further downstream was a livestock drinking bay and adjacent to it a ditch entering the river which appeared to originate from the farmyard a short distance from the river.

Where there is no option of providing livestock drinking facilities away from the riverbank, any drinking bay entering the river should be armoured. It was suggested that the origin of the adjacent ditch and any substances entering from it should be investigated as soon as possible. The presence of Crayfish was also noted at the STW discharge point. It was also noted that horses are being encouraged to graze in an area close to the riverbank. Livestock poaching if allowed to continue further will result in additional sediment loaded of the river and habitat loss.

DC updated that going forward, it is really important to get local knowledge and to get villagers to come together to walk the rivers to note leaks and issues, taking pictures and reporting it. In her area they have set up a what's app group to discuss areas of concern and to address, major issues with Thames water spilling untreated sewage in the rivers but unfortunately in the Cotswolds the rivers are degrading all the time. DC said that Thames Water are now reporting where they are discharging sewage, there is a map they produce which shows the areas affected. The River Coin is becoming more polluted and there are issues with new housing – Thames water do not have the capacity to deal with all the additional sewage these inevitable produce.

DC said you should report issues in the first instance to the Environment agency, but it can be tricky to get anything done. She was asked what power do you have to act in regard to the cleaning up process, as someone in the village suffers from raw sewage in their garden. If we see issues, we can report what is seen but what then happens? What practical things can then be done to improve it. CD said with regards to the Windrush they get together with wildlife trust and about 40 partners to raise the issues and profile of the issues. She said we cannot do very much about it apart from raise concerns and the profile of what is happening. We can also test the rivers for nitrate and phosphate levels especially if we have particular concerns. We can then send reports to Thames water and if there is something major happening you report it to the EA, they issues an incident number which can be referred to. She said we have to keep reporting and highlighting issues with evidence, in particular photographs, they are most important.

DC was asked where we go from here, she said that we need local people to make a difference. We could look to get some of the partners like wildlife trust to come down and help, fell trees, identifying these leaks are important. It is also key to improve our awareness of this.

A lot of people were not aware of the Cotswold rivers trust until they received a copy of the report. It was suggested that it was a very valuable document, it was just disappointing that it stopped at the railway bridge as the Mill Inn is overwhelmed with sewage to the extent that they have to have it pumped out once a week when they are open and busy. The EA used to come and test the water regularly but this has stopped. Recently a pool was refurbished at

that end of the village and the sludge was dumped in the river, causing an island by the pub. Developers were contacted and so was the Cotswold rivers trust but the only advise they could give was to report it to the environment agency.

It was agreed we could look to getting some volunteers in the village to walk the rivers and they could be trained to do the testing for phosphate and nitrate levels so that any changes can be escalated to the EA. DC offered to help train people to do the testing.

She also updated that she has a contact in Coln Rogers who is speaking to the new chairman of the EA to get villages on the Coln to do something. It was agreed we could put a note out to the village via the village what's app group to see if people are interested in forming a volunteer group and get DC to help us with testing and passing concerns to her. It was suggested the school could become involved, ideas for the group were discussed.

Details are as follows: Debbie Campbell <debbie.campbell@cotswoldsrivetrust.org>

7. Elections 2023

An election notice was discussed and will be published. A poster was agreed and will be put up in the village, Cllr Webb asked if anyone would like to become a Cllr there are elections coming up in May.

The Clerk updated all the Cllrs on the documentation they are required to fill out to stand for election in May. She updated that they need to be filled out the forms and hand delivered them to Cotswold District Council Offices by 4th April.

8. 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. The PC discussed the donation to the village hall. 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 were 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. 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 the village hall committee and ask the question before any decision is made.

9. Finance

Cheques were raised for the following:

Wickmedia Domain – Invoice £ 11.28
Community Heartbeat Trust (defib)
Grass cutting £857.14
Clerks Salary Dec 22 & Jan 23 – £477.25
HMRC - £95.45

10. Update County Councillor P Hodgkinson

- Council tax - the GCC portion is rising by 5%. I didn't support the budget put forward by the ruling party on the Council. This represents the largest share of people's council tax payment.
- I've passed to Dan Tiffney the various highways issues raised at the last PC meeting - I assume you've not heard direct from him? I've not seen anything.
- Charlton Hill road closure - the A435 between Seven Springs and the Lilley brook Golf Club will be shut for 6 months from 20/3. This is to completely rebuild the road which is suffering from land slips. Please be aware of this!
- Voter ID will be required for the first time at the 4 May CDC and parish elections. A lot of people are still unaware so please do remind residents.

11. Update for District Councillor Robin Hughes

No update as Cllr Hughes did not attend.

12. Correspondence

E-mail received from Mr P King Snow warden – request had been made by a parishioner for their personal grit bin to be filled at Staple farm cottage. Mr King updated that the County Council do not supply grit to individual householders.

He also wanted to clarify that he is told by highways where to clear snow. It is not his remit to do any general gritting and he does not have the equipment. Snow clearing, in the village is carried out by volunteers, and it is not a right to be able to travel when there are conditions of snow. They clear the roads for emergency vehicles to access the village and not to allow people to be able to go shopping.

Notification has been received by GCC highways to temporarily close part of the road at Harnham Lane from the property known as Stone Roost to the property known as Stone Gables for a distance of approximately 45 metres. The reason for the closure is for a new electricity connection.

13. Any Other Business

An extra ordinary meeting was agreed to take place on the 22nd March for Thames Water to visit the village and discuss the upcoming water main work taking place in the village.

14. Date of the next meetings:

22nd March for Thames Water to visit the village and take questions on their upcoming work.

10th May 2023 (AGM)

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