

MINUTES OF WITHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON Wednesday 10th May 2023 in AT THE JUBILEE HALL,
WITHINGTON AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Cllr Glenys Webb, Cllr Nicky Lowe, Cllr Bruno Brenninkmeijer, Cllr Catherine Boyce, Cllr David Craig, Cllr Alex Barrell, District Councillor Jeremy Theyer, 4 members of the public and the Clerk/RFO.

APOLOGIES: County Cllr Paul Hodgkinson, Cllr David Miles

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA. Cllr Webb – Village Hall. Cllr Brenninkmeijer on 23/00694/FUL Retention of two stables (Retrospective) at Willowside Farm.

1. **MINUTES of the Meetings** held on the 15th March 2023 were circulated prior to the meeting to Councillor's.

Progress report and comments on the meeting held: 15th March 2023

2. Matters Arising

2a The 2000 Trees Festival - The Clerk has chased up this action and written again to CDC Licencing team requesting a meeting with the organisers of 2000 trees event.

Action for the Clerk to chase with the CDC licencing team.

Large Tree at Compton Rise (no update from Cllr Miles)

Willowside stables at Cassey Compton road - 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. FOD_000000812449 – clerk has reported again twice before as no communication has been forthcoming from CDC. PC asked JT to find out why they have not heard anything. He will find out and report back.

Action JT to raise with CDC and report back to the Clerk

23/00694/FUL retention of two stables (retrospective) at Willowside Farm Withington
Voted to object to the current location: the PC asked the JT to take this forward and find out why we have not heard anything about this application even though it was reported in July 2022 and there have been at least 20 objection comments made by members of the public, with one persons mental health being effected. The JT will ask CDC what is happening with this.

Action for JT to raise with CDC and report back to Clerk

23/00603/PLP Land south off Cleevly Cottage Harnham Lane, Concern raised by PC that the Clerk submitted important comments made by them on a recent planning application. However when the CDC planning recommendation report was produced from the officer (Harrison Bowley) it states that there were no comments from Withington Parish

Council. It was reported that the PC think this is a process failure at CDC and very concerning as it harms the reputation of the Parish Council as it does not look to parishioners at Withington that the Parish Council did anything with their comments, especially as so many of them attended the Parish Council meeting to share their objections. The District Councillor was asked to raise this with CDC and pass on their concerns.

Action for JT to raise with CDC and report back to Clerk

For the Clerk to raise the issue of the Footpath and the Kissing Gate, that was redirected by the landowner without permission before the planning application was sent in. To ask what steps have been taken to put the footpath back to its original position. Can CDC update the PC on this so that we can go back to concerned members of the public.

Action to ask CDC what is happening with this and for JH to also look into this and report back to the Clerk.

Action JT will also take all the planning issues to the Chief Executive as the Chief Exec is concerned that communication is very important between CDC and the Parish Councils. JT was asked to stress that if PC views are not held up as PC views they do not hold any weight. A number of people turned up to the meeting to discuss the land at Harnham Lane and if they have read the report from the planning officer they would get the impression that the PC did no do anything with their views and that is reputational damage to the PC

3. James Parker Village Warden – introduction

James updated that he has recently moved into Withington, he knows the area and was a Parish Councillor in Leckhampton. He has recently signed up to the Voluntary Cotswold wardens and they have asked him to be the parish warden for Withington. His main responsibility is for the local footpaths and to make sure they are accessible and maintained. To also identify work that might need doing and to keep them open and in good order.

James Details - james.cotswolds@gmail.com

4. Planning applications

Another problem with CDC was updated as the two new applications received by the Parish Clerk are for information purposes only and the PC is unable to comment on them. It was agreed that these applications were discussed so that the District Councillor knows where the PC stand and can pass on their concerns.

Action JT was asked to raise the concerns of the Parish Council on the planning applications they cannot comment on with CDC planning dept. JH to get feedback and go back to the Clerk.

Notification of the formation of an agricultural access track at Willowside Fields at Land At Grid Reference 403368 215623 Withington Gloucestershire.

There have been a number of e-mails from members of the village who have concerns about this applications. It was agreed that JT would find out who we need to report our concerns to and the clerk to contact CDC to forward our concerns. The track was explained as needed for other agricultural purposes particularly cows, however the land is a water meadow and unsuitable for crazing for most of the year when it becomes water logged, cattle can only be crazed for 2-3 months of the year. The main concern is that over time this track will become permanent. The applicant sent in a letter of explanation but was unable to

attend the meeting. She was happy for villagers to pass on her contact details with concerns to her directly.

Letters received by the Clerk were at the meeting. Although this was published on the CDC planning website there was no way to pass on these concerns. The Parish Council would like this noted.

Tree Felling along the old railway line, was discussed as concern has also been raised in the village concerning this. No application was submitted to CDC or appeared on the website. The tree felling was explained as Ash Dieback but a lot of the trees felled were healthy and not all Ash. This was particularly concerning as it was in nesting seasons. The applicant went directly to the forestry commission for approval to fell the trees. The felling of the trees occurred without warning to the village. The forestry commission did not contact the Parish council at any point of this process.

All protections in AONB seem to have been ignored by this process and CDC were complicit. The village is very upset by it. There is a plan to replant but not with any hardwood trees that were removed but with bushes and small trees of only 3 to 4 ft tall. It was reported that the landowner has been asked to reflect on this decision, but it is obviously his choice.

23/01348/FOREST Forestry Consultation for Felling licence application consultation at Thorndale Farm Withington Cheltenham Gloucestershire.

The purpose of the project is to remove low grade plantation conifer to restore Priority Habitat CG5 calcareous grassland. In so doing it will extend the influence of the contiguous Kilkenny nature reserve by enlarging the habitat available for the priority species Duke of Burgundy Fritillary, Small Blue and adder, which depend on the Kilkenny Reserve. Located next to the Kilkenny Reserve. The PC do not have an issue with the application.

5. Village Hall Donation

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 clerk has written twice to the village hall committee asking for more information, the last letter asked for their business plan. They have responded to the questions but they do not have a business plan.

This was discussed. Cllr Lowe updated on the following:

“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. “

Cllr Lowe updated that she has received an e-mail from Clive Pengelly confirming that money has been received from the sponsors of the platinum jubilee of £607.00.

“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.”

“ 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 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.” The Parish Council has not been charged any fee the donation has not been increased for many years.

Cllrs expressed concern that they have asked what the plan is for the Village hall and there does not seem to be one. Cllr Craig said we should be working together to create a plan. There is a village full of professional people who know about marketing and business plans and it was agreed that people should be asked to help out with this going forward.

Action the Parish Council to respond that: –

It was agreed that the Parish Council should be paying for the use of the village hall. Room rate per hour and the donation will be separate. For the Clerk to go back to them and ask them to propose a rent to the Parish Council for the use of the hall. This will be separate from the donation going forward.

The Parish Council are happy to help create the business plan and ask members of the village for their help with this so that there is a plan going forward to help with all the issues highlighted in the letter. An idea of what the Village Hall are working towards is needed as relying on donations and the odd people hiring the hall will not help in the long run. It was agreed there is a mis understanding of what the Parish Council are asking from the village hall committee with regards to a business plan.

A template was suggested to start working towards before outside help is brought in question or headings they should be thinking about Are there people in the village who are willing to help. A question was raised as to how are the village hall committee formed and how are they elected. Agreed it is important to keep lines of communication open with them.

A question was raised - are the villagers aware that there is a problem with the village hall – it is in need of community support. It was suggested that maybe a couple of Cllrs could go along to one of the Village Hall committee’s meetings to discuss ideas with them and look at how, help can be given to develop the business. It was updated later in the meeting by Cllr Webb that there are around 4 meetings a year, they cannot get grants because they do not have enough bookings. She said that there are reserves but she was not sure what they are at the minute. Cllr Webb said what the hall needs is financial help at the minute not good ideas and the Parish Council will be looking for somewhere else to hold their meetings if it goes on like this as it cannot carry on in the same vein.

6. Update on the Water works situation in Withington and impact on the River Coln

Cllr Brenninkmeijer has written to Thames Water as he has riparian obligations to parts of the River Coln. He said that Andoversford sewage works is going to be remodelled and he has an appointment to go and visit this on the 14th August at 11.00 – he suggested that if any of the Councillors would also like to go with him they are welcome to join him and understand what is going on downstream and what the next plan is regarding our own issues in Withington.

Cllr Lowe updated that there is a sewage plant in Withington called Fulford next to Willowside and the new builds. It is unlicensed, and she has recently attended a river meeting put together by local owners of sections of the River Coln. She updated that at the minute Thames Water can do what they like regarding sewage as it is not regulated and there is a lot of spillage from that area, which currently spills into a residents garden. It was updated that the sewage plant will be under more pressure when the new houses are completed. Cllr Lowe said that we can only report this to the Environment agency or Thames Water to try and improve their practice. Cllr Lowe offered to contact someone she knows from the EV to get them to speak to us. It was updated that this is going to be another big issue for Withington. It was agreed that we need to keep the pressure onto these agencies to get something done about this.

Action for Cllr Lowe to try to get hold of the EV to speak to Withington PC about the sewage plant Fulford?

After the last meeting Cllr Lowe has been in discussion with Debbie Campbell, who offered to get some tests for the village to test the water intermittently as they do along the Windrush. Cllr Lowe said she is happy to contact her again and ask how much this costs before it is taken forward. Cllr Brenninkmeijer said we should really be testing for sewage not nitrates but there is no test currently for that.

Action For Cllr Lowe to speak to Debbie Campbell about the cost of the tests.

7. Thames Water project – any issues

We now have the details of the Customer Liaison Officer called Laura Main for the project. She is also on the What's app group so people in the village know that she is there, and she is contactable if there are any issues. It was suggested that she is asked to give the village a weekly update as to where they are with the project. To address things like, are they on time, is the schedule where they said it would be. A member of the public said he has asked her personally where they are with the project and she responded that they will get a letter, he did not find her particularly helpful or forthcoming with information. There is also no information on the Thames Water website.

Action Cllr Craig will send a message to Laura Main and ask her for a weekly update on the What's app to let villagers know where they are in the project and if it is on time.

Action for the Clerk to send Cllr Brenninkmeijer any closed road information for the What's app – to let villagers know, regarding the project.

8. Updates from District and County Councillors

District Councillor JT said he had no further updates for the Parish Councillors. But if he comes across any information he was asked to pass it onto the clerk as soon as possible and not let it wait until the next meeting. He suggested that the PC sets up its own what's app group so that if there are any planning issues that come in, they can be discussed immediately.

Action to review communication and how we link up going forward and the best format to do that.

County Cllr Hodgkinson sent an update but did not attend the meeting. His written update was read out by the Clerk:

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.

9. Finance

Cheques were raised for the following:

Insurance renewal £404.34 (last year of 3 year agreement) We may need to budget for a substantial increase next year.

GAPTC membership £35.00 (useful information for Cllrs)

Wickmedia invoices x 3 £69.84

Clerks Salary for Feb/March £400.00

HMRC £100.00

Andy Cox grass cutting £45.00

Community Levy has been received of £473.40 which is due to the new builds in the village and is in addition to the precept.

Cllr Alex Barrell signed the finance reconciliation sheet – figures distributed showing the end of year figures. It was reported that we are close to breakeven deficit was reported of £19.54. VAT was also reclaimed this year.

10. Correspondence

Accident in the play area on Sat 15th April. A member of the public was injured on the large round swing – she received a blow to the head. She requests that a warning sign is put up, and something is put around the perimeter of the swing so that the distance the swing goes out to is visible. The Clerk was asked to let our insurance company know and pass on the details. The Play area inspection company to be contacted and let them know what has happened and ask for their assessment. Then write back to the lady involved informing her that this has been reported to the inspector and we are waiting for his conclusions, we will report back to her when we have his assessment.

Action for the Clerk to contact the insurance company that an accident has occurred it involved this piece of equipment.

Action for the Clerk to contact the play area inspection company and ask for their comment on what to do. What is their assessment of this.

Action for the Clerk to go back to the lady who reported the incident to let her know that some action is being taken regarding this.

Loose dogs roaming in Brassington Garden – e-mail received from villager, who wanted to be added to the list of complainants regarding this matter. She updated that there were two loose dogs in Brassington Gardens (these dogs are often loose). Pictures have been posted on WhatsApp so owners would know they'd escaped. Other residents have said that we should expect loose dogs in a farming village. She also said that the dogs are pooping on gardens where children are playing and this can be very dangerous to them if it is touched or ingested.

The e-mail went on to say that after reading the PC minutes she was aware that other complaints had been raised some while ago, and has any progress been made on approaching the known culprits. She was shocked to think that many people think it's fine. I also know that the bin men nearly hit the red lab (posts on the village WhatsApp).

Cllr Craig asked what advise we had been given by CDC on this issue. The Clerk said CDC do not have a dog warden anymore we need to gather evidence and can go down the route of an anti-social behaviour order, which currently is not an option the PC want to take, they would encourage photographs to be taken and once we have evidence we will look at this again. Cllrs ask JT if he could look into this for the PC and speak to CDC to see what they suggest we can do and report back.

Action for JH to look into anti-social behaviour of dogs roaming the village

The Clerk has received information from Sir Geoffrey Clifton Brown on his next flood meetings which will be held later this month on **FRIDAY 19 MAY 2023** at 1000-1200hrs in Moreton in Marsh at the Moreton Area Centre and 1400-1600hrs in Cirencester at Cotswold District Council, everyone is welcome to go along.

11. Any Other Business

Cllr Boyce raised the issue of Charlton Hill being closed for 6 months and the volume of traffic being diverted along the road by Foxcote and Withington. The managers at the Kilkenny sent out messages to Cllr Hodgkinson that there had been 6 accidents and incidents along that stretch and at Garrick Head crossroads due to the additional traffic along that route. There were 6 damaged cars in their carpark at one point. Cllr Boyce said that this is going to carry on for some time yet and it needs highlighting as there is a lot of concern.

She updated that this has been reported to Dan Tiffney at Highways. She said she is happy to contact Cllr Hodgkinson to see what is happening. It was suggested that some signs could be put up to let people know that it is a dangerous crossroads.

Action for Cllr Boyce to ask Cllr Hodgkinson if there is an update from Highways on these incidents.

The Parish Council would like to offer their thanks to Robin Hughes for all his hard work over the years. For his many years of service in support the Parish Council and to Welcome Jeremy Theyer as our new District Councillor.

Action for the Clerk to send a letter of thanks to Robin Hughes for his help and support over the years.

It was updated that the new Withington Parish Council Website is now up and running. Meeting are on there. The PC were asked to appoint someone to manage it and to add information to it, when required. Volunteers were asked to do this. It was agreed that it sat with the person who also updates the What's app. Cllr Brenninkmeijer volunteered and agreed to be the only person who updates the Parish Council website going forward.

Action Cllr Brenninkmeijer to produce a flow chart and process for Cllrs to request information to be added to the new website going forward.

Currently the minutes from the last year are on there. There is only a draft copy of the November minutes the Clerk was asked to send over the updated version.

Action for the Clerk to send over minutes to Cllr Brenninkmeijer, he will take over the administration of the Parish Council for the new website going forward.

Cllr Brenninkmeijer was asked what the best way of communicating between Councillors was and it was agreed to set up an What's app group for the Councillors to send messages to. We can then test how this will work going forward.

Action Cllr Brenninkmeijer will set up the what's app group for the Parish Councillors.

Date of the next meetings:

26th July 2023

Meeting closed at 21.30.