

**Wokingham Without Parish Council
Minutes of the Council Meeting
Held on Monday 1st February 2021**

Via Zoom Video Conference

Commencing 7:30pm and concluding at 9.20pm

- Present:** Councillors J Cannon, D Dye, R Fenny, N Martin, K Newland, A Plume, J Rogers, P Stephens and S Turtle. Katy Hughes - Clerk, Sharon Way – Assistant Clerk. Borough Councillors C Bowring and A Ross, plus one member of the public.
- Apologies:** Councillors L Foxwell, R Gough and D Latimer. Borough Cllr P Helliari-Symons

At the time of this meeting both NALC and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) have asked local councils to stop holding any physical meetings or gatherings. This includes full council, committee meetings, annual parish or council meetings. In order to comply with NALC guidance, this meeting was undertaken using Zoom video conferencing.

In line with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meeting) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, Part 2, item 5: 5.—(1) A reference in any enactment to a meeting of a local authority is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

20/155 WELCOME

Cllr Newland welcomed everyone to the meeting.

20/156 ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Foxwell, Gough and Latimer, and Borough Councillor Helliari-Symons.

20/157 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20/158 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

- a) Cllr Newland invited comments on the minutes of the meetings held on Monday 11th January 2020. No comments were made.

Following a proposal from Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Martin it was:

RESOLVED: Minutes of Monday 11th January were AGREED

- b) Matters arising from the minutes of the above meeting.
None.

20/159 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

20/160 BOROUGH COUNCILLORS BRIEFING

Cllr Ross stated that there would be an extraordinary planning committee on 24th March to consider the SDR and SDL applications, and invited WWPC to make comments at the meeting.

Cllr Ross stated that resurfacing of Nine Mile Ride up to the railway bridge had been completed.

Cllr Ross stated that it was uncertain whether the local elections will occur on May 6th. One concern is that people may not wish to go into polling stations due to Covid.

Cllr Fenny stated that flooding was frequently occurring across the borough, which he felt was due to inadequate maintenance of the road drainage as a result of budget cuts. Cllr Ross stated that the budget has not been cut, but that the maintenance requirement has become more extensive over time (e.g. due to the growth of tree roots). Cllr Fenny encouraged the borough councillors to promote regular road and drainage maintenance.

Cllr Plume noted that the flooding issue had been raised at the liaison meeting and encouraged members to submit photographic evidence of flooding in the parish.

Cllr Plume asked Cllr Ross for a report on the meeting between the WBC officers and the police regarding antisocial behaviour at Bigshotte Park. Cllr Ross stated that a joint report would be issued imminently.

20/161 CLERKS REPORT

The Clerk stated that the Memorial Hall remains closed and Pinewood Hall is now being used four-days per week by the nursery. Security and the grounds team are making regular checks on the buildings. WWPC insurers have been notified of the extended closure of the Memorial Hall. WWPC have received a total of £8,144.93 in financial support from WBC from government backed Covid support grants, for the Memorial Hall.

The Clerk stated that repairs to replace a damaged gate post and fencing panels along the exit lane in Pinewood were completed on 27th January.

The Clerk stated that surfacing repairs in the slide area of the toddler play area have been completed. A date is currently pending for the work to the adventure play area as the contractor is awaiting delivery of parts.

The Clerk stated that the PS&A working group has reviewed the request for storage from EBOS and the council's own storage requirements, and the working group were minded to conclude that some storage in keeping with the woodland setting, may be feasible. Likewise, the finance working group concluded that supporting EBOS's storage request will assist them to reduce their outgoings and hopefully make the rent more affordable to them. There are a number of other issues to deal with, for example obtaining planning consent for containers, but details are now being put together and it is hoped that this can be brought to the next council meeting.

The Clerk stated that Grant payments to local organisations, approved at the December council meeting, have been paid out on 1st February.

The Clerk stated that an issue has been resolved with unauthorised 'no cycling' stickers that had been put on lampposts on OWR near Buckler's Park. It is suspected that these were put up by disgruntled residents. L&G will put up some signage to confirm that the path is a shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Clerk noted that correspondence has been exchanged with WBC regarding S106 money for allotments and allotment improvements that is available for WWPC to bid for. The Clerk has been in contact with the Pinewood Allotment Association to ask for suggested projects or improvements. There is a possibility that WWPC could utilise these funds if it were to proceed

with a community food garden on the land at the Memorial Hall, though this is subject to any final decision on the use of the land.

The Clerk will put together a newsletter for February and asked members to provide content to be included. The Clerk also stated that the Pinewood history book has been published.

The Clerk stated that the following meetings are planned to take place in early February:

- The Internal Audit is due to be carried out on Wednesday and Thursday (3rd / 4th February) in the office and remotely.
- Meeting will be held with Loddon Valley Ramblers on 9th February, to progress proposals for integrating footpaths with plans for the SW SDL.
- A 6 monthly website review meeting will be held on Wednesday 10th February and members are encouraged to submit any comments on the website to the Clerk.

Cllr Plume asked whether any feedback had been received following the visit to the Memorial Hall by the WBC Energy Manager in December. The Clerk stated that a site visit was booked for 17th February (to be confirmed) for WBC contractors to visit the site and provide indicative pricing for energy saving measures. The Clerk had not received any report from the December meeting and would follow this up.

20/162 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE / OTHER MEETINGS

A) Cycling meeting (15th January 2021)

Cllr Rogers reported that a useful discussion was held with Finchampsted Parish Council (FBC) resulting in an exchange of ideas. The WBC Active Travel officer, Robert Curtis, needs to identify travel routes as part of the process for accessing funding and has been encouraged to work with FBC, WWPC and Barkham. The Clerk has subsequently met with the FBC and Barkham clerks to look at cross parish projects

B) Parish and ward member meeting (21st January 2021).

Cllr Newland noted that this meeting is open to all members and encouraged members to attend future meetings.

C) Byway 28 meeting (21st January 2021).

Cllr Rogers stated that the meeting went well and a plan was developed. WBC officers offered practical solutions to the issues raised. It is hoped that the work will be carried out in May.

Cllr Turtle noted that the removal of vehicle use was possible and asked whether this had been pursued. Cllr Rogers stated that rather than prevent vehicular access it had been concluded that the best solution was to accommodate this by the provision of a suitable higher-grade surfacing material in the part of the byway subject to higher vehicular usage. Those areas subject to lighter usage could have lower grade materials.

D) Public spaces and amenities working group (25th January 2021)

Cllr Plume directed members to the notes and the decision paper regarding playground equipment, appended to the agenda.

Following a proposal from Cllr Martin and seconded by Cllr Turtle it was:

RESOLVED: The replacement of playground equipment as recommended in Agenda Item 8E was AGREED

E) Meeting with representatives following an approach from the Men's Shed organisation (26th and 28th January)

The Clerk and Cllr Plume held a Zoom meeting with representatives of the Men's Shed organisation, who are keen to establish a group for the Wokingham Without / Crowthorne area. The Clerk and Cllr Plume are in discussion with the group regarding the preparation of a decision paper, and it is hoped that representatives of the organisation will join the March or April meeting to present information about Men's Shed and answer members questions. The Clerk noted that the initial location may be the storage unit at Memorial Hall but longer term a larger site at Pinewood or alternative location is probably desirable.

- F) Climate Emergency working group. Cllr Canon reported that the meeting was good with a number of very interesting presentations, which Cllr Canon summarised. Cllr Canon advised that copies of the presentations were available if members wished to view them. Cllr Canon noted that it is intended that future meetings will have shorter presentations allowing more time for discussion.

20/163 PLANNING

- A. To receive comments from members on current planning applications.
Cllr Rogers referred to the planning application related to the land on the north east of Hinton Drive, which is currently scrubland (Ref 203464). The applicant appears to have not had pre-planning advice and that this should be recommended. Cllr Rogers stated that she felt the application itself is poorly written. Cllr Rogers has provided Cllr Lancaster several comments. The Clerk advised that Cllr Lancaster had agreed with these comments and finalised comments will therefore be prepared and circulated prior to submission.

Cllr Martin referred to the 5G mast planning application (Ref 206307) on land outside the parish and noted that he has submitted personal comments. Cllr Turtle noted that WWPC should consider submitting comments. The proposals were discussed in terms of aesthetics and the possible effects of the 5G signal. Cllr Martin agreed to circulate comments following the meeting for consideration by members and it was noted that this should be restricted to matters that can form grounds for objection. Members were asked to consider the comments circulated by Cllr Martin and provide any proposals for comments to be made on behalf of WWPC to the Assistant Clerk.

- B. To receive a verbal report on any planning matter of note from Cllr Lancaster
As Cllr Lancaster was not present no report was made.
- C. To note comments submitted and updates received.
Cllr Newland appreciated the feedback from planners on WWPC comments that was now being circulated by the Assistant Clerk.

20/164 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Clerk referred members to the summary of the council's income and expenditure to date for 2020-21, included as appendix 10 of the agenda.

20/165 INTERNAL AUDIT

The Clerk stated that members were required to approve the appointment of the Council's Internal Auditor for 2020-21 (see appendix 11 of the agenda).

Following a proposal from Cllr Fenny and seconded by Cllr Plume it was:

RESOLVED: The reappointment of Claire Connell as the Internal Auditor for the year 2020-21 was AGREED.

20/166 CIRCLE HILL AND WALTERS REC

The Clerk stated that additional costs have been incurred at Circle Hill and Walters Rec, mainly related to tree works. Costs now exceed the budget and therefore council approval for the additional spending is required.

Cllr Plume asked whether any checks were being made to ensure value for money for these works. Cllr Newland stated that members were present on the board of trustees and the works, commissioned by Crowthorne Parish Council, who administer the management of the two areas, were being undertaken by a preferred contractor who had demonstrated value for money.

Cllr Turtle stated that WWPC is under no obligation to contribute in excess of the budgeted figure.

Cllr Rogers suggested that this should be a one-off payment which is then deducted from future years' allocations. Cllr Turtle agreed and suggested that WWPC should review the balance between expenditure on this land and that on the much larger Pinewood land.

Following a proposal from Cllr Newland and seconded by Cllr Turtle it was:

RESOLVED: The proposal that the authorised budget would be increased to £5,000 and the increase to be clawed back over future years was AGREED by a majority vote.

20/167 CIL ACCOUNT

Cllr Newland outlined the proposal given in Appendix 13A of the agenda to approve a transfer of funds from the council's CIL account to the council's current account to reflect CIL spending to date.

Following a proposal from Cllr Turtle and seconded by Cllr Fenny it was:

RESOLVED: The transfer of funds was AGREED.

Cllr Newland referred members to the proposals given in Appendix 13B of the agenda. The Clerk stated that it was proposed to approve updates to the signatories for the council's CIL account to remove signatories no longer councillors, to update the administration of the account to ensure that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk can effectively oversee and operate the account and to update the account to allow the use of BACS for the transfer of funds. This will facilitate the movement of CIL funds throughout the year. Cllrs Plume and Martin volunteered to be new councillor signatories.

Following a proposal from Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Fenny it was:

RESOLVED: The recommendations with respect to the CIL account given in appendix 13B of the agenda were AGREED.

20/168 REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF DOCUMENTS AND POLICIES

A. To review and adopt the council's risk register 2021-22

The Clerk discussed the risk register document, given in Appendix 14A of the agenda, which has been updated, including Covid related impacts. Cllr Newland invited members' comments, none were received.

Following a proposal from Cllr Canon and seconded by Cllr Martin it was:

RESOLVED: The risk register for 2021-22 was AGREED.

B. To review and approve a members' expense policy

The Clerk discussed the proposed expense policy given in appendix 14B of the agenda, which was a recommendation of the Internal Auditor. Cllr Newland asked whether there was an additional

auditing cost associated with this policy. The Clerk stated that the policy did not propose any change to the procedures that would normally be undertaken (to refund travel and parking costs, at permitted HMRC levels, for councillors travelling outside the parish for activities such as training) and therefore no additional costs would be incurred.

Following a proposal from Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Turtle it was:

RESOLVED: The expense policy was AGREED.

C. To review and approve a council reserves policy

The Clerk stated that it was recommended to have a reserves policy and outlined the reasons for the proposal given in appendix 14C of the agenda. Cllr Newland asked whether it was appropriate for a policy document to include annual figures. The Clerk stated that it is appropriate provided that the point in time to which the figures are applicable is identified in the document, and that the document is updated when the reserves change.

Cllrs Newland noted that inclusion of the figures required the policy to be changed at least once every year. Cllr Rogers suggested that the figures should be moved to a dated annex to the policy and that the values in this annex should be debated and agreed as part of the usual budget process in January.

The Clerk stated that the figures could be removed from the policy and replaced with a statement that the current balance of earmarked and general reserves can be supplied by the parish office on request. This proposal was supported by Cllrs Newland, Rogers and Plume.

Following a proposal from Cllr Fenny and seconded by Cllr Plume it was:

RESOLVED: The reserves policy was AGREED, subject to removal of Section 6 Current Level of Financial Reserves.

20/169 PINWOOD LEASES

Cllr Newland stated that no reply had been received to his letter to WBC of 18th December 2020.

20/170 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

Cllr Newland mentioned that during a review of the Pinewood site, members found that the scout gang show hut has been used for the storage of hay bales. The parish office has written to the scouts requesting removal of the hay due to the clear fire hazard and were advised that the hay would be removed over the weekend 30-31st January.

20/171 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION AT FUTURE MEETINGS:

Cllr Plume noted the intention to invite representatives of the Men's Shed Association to make a presentation to members at the March or April meeting. Cllr Newland suggested a possible 7.00pm start to allow time for the presentation and questions.

20/172 MEETING CLOSED AT 9.20 PM

Date of next meeting – Meeting of the Parish Council at 7.30pm on Monday 1st March 2021

Signed:

Date: 1st March 2021