

RADFORD SEMELE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

A virtual meeting of the Parish Council was held on Monday 26th October 2020 at 7.30 pm.

Participants: Cllr S Sabin (in the chair), Cllr D Carter, Cllr B Follett, Cllr B Friar, Cllr A T Hitchcox, Cllr A Malin, Cllr Mrs J P Malin, Cllr R Munn and Cllr J Sudbury

In attendance: WCC Cllr Redford and WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt

1. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence from Cllr T Musa (by reason of his marriage). Cllr Sabin declared an interest in the potential donation to British Legion and Cllr Mrs Malin in respect of the Community Hall. It was AGREED that the Chairman and the Clerk would arrange for a congratulations card to be given to Cllr Musa.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Council meeting on 28th September 2020

The Minutes of the virtual Council meeting held on the 28th September 2020 were approved, proposed by Cllr Friar and seconded by Cllr Munn.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Council meeting on 28th September 2020

1. The Chairman reported on activity on the Bovis No 2 site connected with the exit way onto Offchurch Lane; Representations by Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt and himself to Lucy Hammond at WDC Planning Dept, seem to have borne fruit at last.
2. The Chairman referred to the recent report that a number of speeding drivers had been caught on camera by the Police – this was considered to be a positive development.
3. Debate ensued concerning the Highway Code Consultation (Government paper); this is solely related to parking on pavements - not a code for drivers. The conclusion of the Chairman and Clerk was that the proposals in the White Paper were of no benefit to our Parish. It offers four options. It was AGREED that it should be delegated to the Chairman and the Clerk to complete the response to the Paper and lodge it before the expiry date of 22nd November. They would go for maintaining the status quo.
Action: Chairman & Clerk
4. Cllr Carter had circulated a paper on what he had learnt from a recent seminar with WALC on the proposals for altering planning application rules. Potentially these could have wide reaching effects that could undo the extensive effort that had been put in for our Parish to restricting further housing development. He proposed that the Council should object to the suggested changes to the Local Plan process and also the way in which the contribution by developers to infrastructure would be calculated. The way in which this money was to be allocated also left much to be desired. His proposed reply to the consultation paper was carried unanimously.
5. The Chairman referred to the publicity and presentations made by WCC to promote the idea for a Unitary Authority comprising, basically, WCC. The Clerk said nothing constructive could be proceeded with until the Government produced its White Paper; it appears from comments made by Matt Western, MP for Leamington and others, that the Government will not proceed with the issue of the White Paper at the present time (they have too many other things to attend to).
6. The Chairman was pleased to report that at the recent Eastern Neighbourhood Forum a policing priority of checking speed on the A425 had been accepted. This was some progress.

4. Traffic management issues

The Clerk had received a letter dated 19th October from Mr Scott Tompkins, Asst Director of Traffic Services at WCC. A copy of the letter had been circulated to all. Its contents were disappointing because it did not provide satisfactory answers to specific issues. Cllr Sudbury said the only way to resolve matters was to push for face to face meetings with Mr Tompkins' subordinates who were dealing with specific issues as soon as face to face meetings are practical. It was AGREED that the Chairman and Clerk would separate out the various issues covered by, firstly, the Clerk's letter of 7th May 2019, and secondly, Mr Tompkins' general response so that each category of issue could be treated as a separate matter/file and representations could be made to the appropriate person at WCC accordingly. All the issues raised in the Clerk's original letter of 7th May 2019 would be pursued..

5. Section 106 and CIL payments

Issues around Section 106/CIL payments are tied up with Mr Scott Tompkins' letter and relate to the various traffic issues where we are looking for money to be spent. No response had yet been received from David Anderson of the Open Space Dept of WDC on the three matters which relate to Open Space payments (referred to in previous Council meetings). The Chairman had prepared three separate files concerning these matters and passed them to WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt with a view to her pursuing the matter through WDC quarters.

Action: WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt

6. Warwickshire County Council – update report

Cllr Redford reported that:

1. WCC is making provision of laptops for children to cope with their school work online in circumstances where actually attending school on a constructive basis in the present situation is very difficult.
2. WCC has undertaken to cover the cost of school meals for the half term so that children and their parents are not out of pocket; it is expected that WCC will carry on with this process for the Christmas holiday period as well.
3. The HS2 company has closed part of the A425 despite protestations from all concerned. It does not appear to include restrictions on Radford Semele, but it will cause considerable problems for Ufton and Southam and normal users of the A425 in the region of those villages. He said that HS2 had refused to negotiate the position with WCC, their usual response being to state that they were authorised by Government legislation and would proceed as they saw fit. WCC are continuing to try and mitigate the impact on the Fosse Road and Welsh Road despite the lack of cooperation.
4. WCC will try and keep utility companies onside so that there is minimum disruption to the other roadways in the area whilst HS2 have blocked off the A425.
5. North Leamington School is currently closed due to an outbreak of Covid-19. It does not appear to be serious, but the School are being cautious. It is likely to be opened up after half term.
6. Cllr Sudbury asked what progress was being made on the installation of the bollard on the footpath W123; Cllr Redford said he understood that it was in hand. The Clerk clarified the position that Richard Barnard at WCC had decided to write to the residents to see if there were any objections and one particular resident had raised an issue which had probably slowed up the installation but it is hoped that this will get done in early course. The Clerk is continuing to monitor the position with Mr Barnard.

Action: Clerk

7. Warwick District Council – update report

WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt reported:

1. All the staff at WDC were working from home and Riverside House is more or less empty.

2. The Covid-19 infection rate in Leamington has gone up significantly, probably largely due to an influx of the student population.
3. There is now available a test centre in Court Street where appointments are necessary; on any issues arising Bernadette Allen at WDC is the contact person to deal with it.
4. The Leamington Royal Spa Centre, Art Gallery and Museum have received a grant from the Arts Council England's Culture Recovery Fund – we are not sure of the exact amount or when it will get paid but it is in the pipeline.
5. A Woodlands award has been made in respect of the quality of the Jephson Gardens, Mill Gardens and Oakley Wood crematorium.
6. WDC leisure centres are currently operating on a limited basis.

8. Financial Matters

1. The Clerk had circulated a bank reconciliation statement which gives the present bank account balances – the investment account is £34,309 approx and the operating account is £24,355 approx. The latter has been enhanced recently by receipt of the second half year Precept of £15,294 and VAT refund sum of £1,876.45.
2. A number of payments were authorised as per the list tabled. The Chairman of the Finance Committee and the Clerk reported that there had been a little difficulty concerning recent payments to the Clerk; following the announcement of his pay agreed in the summer months, the payroll manager had issued two pay slips for the same amount of money which had given the impression that the Clerk should be paid the same sum twice. This discrepancy had been corrected and although a previous payment had been authorised, it was AGREED that the balance of the sum now due to the Clerk should be paid – namely £1,327.20. The authorisation of these payments was proposed by Cllr Sudbury and seconded by Cllr Munn.
3. The Chairman said he had got a provisional quotation for the cost of the plaque to be attached to the pear tree in the sum of £177.55. It might be variable by a few pounds. The Clerk advised that in view of the low amount and previous discussion, it was appropriate to give authority for this expenditure; it was proposed by Cllr Friar and seconded by Cllr Sudbury. The Chairman is to obtain a concrete figure, and this can be paid in due course. **Action: Chairman**
4. Cllr Friar said he was concerned to put in place a budget for approval by the Council at their meeting on 30th November; as there is no Council meeting in December and by the time of the January meeting it will have been necessary to file the Precept with WDC. The Clerk confirmed that as a matter of law, the whole Council must confirm the Precept. Cllr Friar proposed that in the next couple of weeks there should be an extempore meeting of Cllrs to put forward proposals as to potential items in the Budget for next year. A meeting subsequently held but before the main Council meeting at the end of November would then convert these proposals into to budget items. It was AGREED that these two sets of meetings should be organised by Cllr Friar. **Action: Cllr Friar**
5. The Clerk reported that the External Audit has now been concluded. A lot of the discussion with the Auditor engaged in by Cllr Friar and himself centred on form filling and appropriate box ticking; the Auditor's certificate is expected soon.

9. Correspondence

1. The Clerk had received further approach from Tallis Woodland Wellbeing; this organisation appears to provide courses to help people with mental health issues and they are encouraged to get out into woodland etc. The email referred to a local resident who is involved and asked whether posters could be put up. It was AGREED that the Clerk would put up a poster on the noticeboard as supplied and likewise a copy will go on the website. **Action: Clerk**

2. The Clerk had put up on the noticeboard (copied to the website) of two WDC press releases; one dealt with current arrangements for dealing with Covid-19 infections and the other to events around Firework Day in the light of the necessity for social distancing.
3. The Clerk had received a circular concerning arrangements for Remembrance Day; the Chairman said that Rev Martin Green had arranged to put a Remembrance Day service from St Nicholas' Church on Facebook and the Chairman had contributed by reading off the names of the fallen heroes. He will place the Council's poppy wreath at the Church in an appropriate manner; there will be no church service or any other physical event.
4. The Clerk had been approached by former councillor David Chater for advice in response to pressure to open the Community Hall on a commercial basis. The Clerk had advised extreme caution and, where in doubt, refuse any applications for hiring. The predominant factor is that the insurers for the Community Hall advise against opening up in the present climate. A private meeting restricted to 6 people may be an option but not general commercial letting.
5. The Clerk had received an email approach from a land agent acting on behalf of a property company interested in acquiring part of the field adjacent to the Glebe House and the A425; the thrust of the email is to enquire whether this Council would support an application for planning consent. In view of the sensitivity of this issue (i.e. the vast amount of housing development which had already taken place around the Village) it was AGREED that the Chairman and WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt and the Clerk would collaborate in an appropriate response to this enquiry.

Action: Chairman, WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt & Clerk

10. Planning Matters

1. W/15/1635 - 56 Southam Road
The Chair and Cllr Carter confirmed the situation was ongoing.
2. 9 Lythall Close (ongoing)
The Clerk has written to Richard Barnard again.
3. 68 Southam Road
The Chairman proposed that this item be closed. This was agreed

11. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Friar reported that the examination process was going slowly; currently the Examiner appears to be concentrating on an application by Bishops Tachbrook. On 5th November 2020 there will be a meeting of the NP working party.

12. Update on the Playing Field

1. Cllr Follett reported that the application for the grant has now been accepted and he is awaiting formal confirmation.
2. In respect of the items raised by the RoSPA report last year, he has obtained a quotation from Wicksteed who are established play equipment providers. They have issued quotations to repair the swings, the zip wire equipment and refurbishment of the skateboard area. The total amount involved is about £19,000. The Clerk advised that for expenditure of this kind there should be an Agenda item at a future meeting and a resolution of the Council undertaken. It was AGREED that the matter should be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting and Cllr Follett will seek to obtain definite quotations in writing for the three items. The Chairman pointed out this expenditure should be adequately covered by monies received under Section 106 and CIL in due course.

Action: Cllr Follett

3. Cllr Hitchcox is continuing to pursue replacement of the three dog bins on the Playing Field with the addition of a fourth dog bin to be placed in the location of The Valley. The Clerk said that if this item is placed on Highway land then consent from the Highways Dept will need to be obtained. It was AGREED that the Clerk should proceed to do this. A plan to assist him is to be produced by Cllrs Friar and the Chairman.

Action: Chairman, Cllr Friar & Clerk

4. Reference was made by Cllr Hitchcox to an item discussed at a previous meeting – the positioning of items on the Playing Field boundary by a number of occupants of Lay Gardens. Some items are rubbish and other items are the installation of paving slabs to make walkways. It was AGREED that the names and addresses of all the relevant occupants of the houses on the boundary will be obtained and then the Clerk will write to the residents requesting them to desist.

Action: Cllr Hitchcox & Clerk

13. Update on Scout Hut

Cllr Friar said there was nothing to report.

14. Update report on Sports & Social Club matters

1. Cllr Mrs Malin said that the Club Treasurer's report had now been prepared which showed the figures were not as good as previously thought but the Club is holding its own. Events for Halloween and Christmas are not now going to happen which will affect the income. They are working on trying to arrange a New Year event in the current difficult circumstances.
2. The Scarecrows event organised by Sunbeams Nursery was a success, but it is regretted that inadequate publicity was given to it; 44 scarecrows were entered.
3. It is hoped that, to celebrate Poppy Day, some form of quiz will be organised.
4. Cllr Sudbury said he would like to comment that when he has visited the Club he has been impressed by how seriously they take proper organisation to deal with the current pandemic.

15. Update report from Community Hall Committee

Cllr Mrs Malin said the Committee were due to meet on 27th October and they are very grateful for the £5,000 grant received from this Council which will help them tide over the almost total lack of income at present. They are expecting to get £1,000 grant from WDC, but it has not yet been received. As indicated above, currently there are no commercial hirings of the Hall although there was a meeting of the Social Club under strict conditions recently.

16. Update on School matters

There was nothing to report. Cllr Sudbury has been seeking to create a link with the PTA but so far there has been no progress.

17. Report on the website

1. Cllr Friar has prepared an initial draft on equality and diversity policy and put it before the Clerk; the objective is to install the final version on the website.
2. Cllr Friar is working with the now Mrs Musa to ensure that the website is friendly for disabled users. This is a difficult project and he is asking the people at the server to look at the possibilities for alterations in the system.
3. He is pleased to report that more hits on the website had been received which shows awakening interest with the public.

18. Update on Covid-19 Support group arrangements

Cllr Friar said things had been quiet, but he expected there could be an upturn in the light of increased infection rates in the country.

19. Review of emergency procedures

Cllr Sudbury had circulated what he hoped was the final version of the emergency procedures. Subject to comment by Cllrs, it should be approved at the next meeting in final form.

20. Update on pond refurbishment

Cllr Sudbury reported that he and Cllr Hitchcox had had site meeting with FoRGE representatives; they initially expressed the view there was no need to undertake any work at present. It was AGREED that a specialist report would be obtained identifying what needs to be done in early course and what would be a long-term plan.
Action: Cllrs Sudbury and Hitchcox

21. Any Other Business

1. The Chairman reported that he had received an email from a resident suggesting that we could consider the possibility of installing an 'Effective Speed Sign', (the Smiley Face type), in a suitable position on the A425 in a further attempt to reduce speeding. It was agreed that such a scheme would be investigated.
2. The Chairman reported that he had received a suggestion that we should consider setting up a 'Community Speedwatch Group'. This had in fact been suggested by Cllr Mrs Malin sometime ago, but through lack of support, was never taken forward. In recent correspondence with the Warwickshire Constabulary, regarding traffic speeding through the Village, Neal Westwood, Traffic Management Advisor, Warwickshire Police, actually suggested that we could set up such a group. PCSO Sharron Underwood has also informed us that she has the name of a volunteer willing to assist with the scheme. It was agreed that we should use our Social Media outlets to canvass for more volunteers. It was AGREED that Cllr Malin, Cllr Mrs Malin and Cllr Munn would form a working group to investigate this.
Action: Cllrs Munn, Malin & Mrs Malin

21. Date of next meeting

It was AGREED that this will take place on 30th November 2020 (in virtual format). This meeting closed at 9.47 pm

Signed.....

Date..... 2020

Chairman of the Parish Council

Counter signed.....

Date.....2020

Clerk to the Parish Council