

Minutes of Meeting on 5 September 2022

Witham on the Hill Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Witham on the Hill Parish Council (Min 22-03) 5 September 2022 at 7.00 p.m. held at St Andrews Village Hall. Witham on the Hill

Present: Councillors: Charles Henriques (Presiding), Paul Smith, and Sue Pennant Jones

Others: Bernard Champness – Clerk,

Open Forum

No residents were present and there was no Open Forum

The meeting was formally opened at 19.06

36. Apologies for absence, acceptance of Apologies

No apologies were received as all Councillors were present. Apologies were received from District Cllr Penny Robins due to a training meeting.

37. Declaration of Interest – To receive Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests, as set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011 and the nature of those interests relating to any Agenda item

No one declared an interest in any matter that was on the agenda.

38. Minutes of the last meeting held on the 4 July 2022 (22-02)

Resolved: That the minutes of the 4 July 2022 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

39. Matters to Report

Cllr Pennant Jones said that the road surface in Bottom Street was in a very poor condition. Cllr Henriques said that he had reported the potholes on Fix My Street as had other residents and some work had been done earlier in the year, but this hadn't really addressed the problems. It was agreed that this would be reported once again in the hope that full repair would be undertaken.

Cllr Pennant Jones again reported that the area around the garages off East Green was still untidy despite her reporting this on Fix My Street. She was advised to e-mail Cllr Robins to see if she could arrange for the Big Clean to do the work in October.

It appears that the streetlights are working around the village. There was discussion about the possibility that the period of illumination might be restricted given the rise in energy costs faced by everyone. Nothing had been heard about such a proposal but it was noted that some residents had objected to this idea in the past.

The Clerk was asked to write to the school asking that parents who walk their dogs be reminded to clean up after them and in particular not to bag it and then leave it on the verge or in a bush, but dispose of it properly. Shooting on the southern edge of the Grimsthorpe estate will take place as usual and the poultts had recently been put out, so everyone should keep dogs on a lead if walking round 'the circuit'. A resident has complained that someone was allowing their dog to regularly foul

the grass kerb on Main Street by Palace Farm. It was thought this problem could get worse as the nights draw in.

40. To Co-opt 2 (two) Councillors

The position had not changed since the last meeting but an individual had expressed a willingness to join the Council and the Clerk would be making contact shortly so the necessary paperwork could be completed

41. To receive a report from the County and District Councillors.

County Cllr Charlotte Vernon was not present and had not sent a report.

District Cllr Penny Robins had sent her apologies and a report as set out below:

August is traditionally a quiet time for the Council with many officers utilising their yearly holiday entitlement. As a result, there have been no meetings to speak of. There is nothing substantial to report this evening.

I would like to congratulate Witham on the Hill for coming third in the small villages competition. It is a lovely village, and I would imagine the village is pleased with the result.

The Big Clean is due to come to Witham on Friday 7th October

42. Clerks Report and Correspondence received.

The Clerk had circulated in advance notice of the various e-mails received since the last meeting. If anyone wanted to see any e-mails they should let him know and he would send it on.

43. Planning Applications to Approve:

1. There were none to note

2, Planning Applications approved: - S22/1224 - Proposed front porch, internal alterations, roof lights and other external alterations including first floor balcony at St Halina Bottom Street

S22/0889 - Proposal: Conversion of existing barn to two storey dwelling (amendments to S08/LB/7038) at Palace Farm Main Street

3, Planning Applications refused: there were none to note

44 To receive any data from the reactive sign

A report had been prepared by Cllr Henriques as below:

The first download from the speed sign covers the period 18th April to 20th June when the batteries expired as planned to ensure full charge can be maintained. The siting of the sign is not ideal and will be addressed as larger parked vehicles mask the oncoming traffic and some double counting occurs.

It is reassuring to find the average higher speed of vehicles is still under 30mph while the average lower speed is about 23mph. Whilst it is to be expected there will be some significant

transgressors there are very few and mostly doing 40/45 mph in the early hours. However, the highest speed recorded for the period was 55mph on 27th May at 10.50pm.

The sign is activated when a car reaches the pub so while the data suggests that the majority of traffic is generally travelling at a lot less than 30mph through the village, however it will be interesting to see how this compares with traffic entering from Little Bytham.

Peak traffic flow is recorded as between 7am and 8am with an afternoon peak between 4.00pm and 5.00pm.

A question was asked about when it was likely that the sign would be moved to the other end of the village. Cllr Henriques said that he was looking at the options and that an extension pole would probably be needed so existing signage could be adapted to take the mounting plate.

45. To discuss the proposed increase in the charges by APS for payroll services and whether we change providers

Advanced Payroll Services had written to explain that their charges were going to increase. At the moment they were charging £12 per month to run payroll and the new prices would be £49.50 per pay run + £3.50 per payslip created. The Clerk explained that in his opinion this increase was excessive, and he asked David Thornburn (auditor) if he ran payroll and if so how much would he charge. He said his charge would be £25 per month. Advice had been sought from LALC on whether this would compromise the independence of the Internal Auditor. The advice was that if someone from his company ran payroll and invoiced the Council for their services then there would be no conflict. The Clerk asked APS if they could match this charge, but they said they could not. **Resolved** that we would accept the offer from David Thornburn to provide payroll services.

46. To discuss civility and respect and sign up to a pledge which is designed to help define the right behaviour within the Council, to prevent bullying and to support councils demonstrating high standards of conduct.

NALC and LALC had written regarding the above and this is part of the introduction on the NALC website.

NALC, SLCC, and OVW believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

The Civility and Respect Pledge is being introduced because there is no place for bullying, harassment and intimidation within our sector. The pledge is easy for councils to sign up for and it will enable councils to demonstrate that they are committed to standing up to poor behaviour across our sector and to driving through positive changes which support civil and respectful conduct.

We invite all councils to take the Civility and Respect Pledge

By signing the Pledge, your council is agreeing that the council will treat councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles and that it:

- Has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff
- Has signed up to the Code of Conduct for councillors
- Has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work policy.
- Will seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise
- Will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens
- Will continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council through for example the Local Council Award Scheme
- Supports the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

Resolved: that we would sign up to this pledge

47. To discuss the South Kesteven District Council Consultation on Gambling Statement of Principles August 2022

An email had been sent from South Kesteven District Council regarding the above and this was circulated to all Councillors before the meeting. It was agreed that this did not affect us and we had no comment.

48. To discuss the Option to opt out of the SAAA central external auditor appointment arrangements

Under the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015, SAAA is responsible for appointing external auditors to all applicable opted-in smaller authorities, for setting the terms of appointment for limited assurance reviews and for managing the contracts with the appointed audit firms. Smaller authorities are those whose gross annual income or expenditure is **less than £6.5 million**. The next 5-year appointing period runs from 2022-23 until 2026-27 and SAAA has undertaken a procurement exercise to appoint auditors to each County area from 1 April 2022. Now that the submission deadline for the 2021-22 Annual Governance and Accountability Returns has passed, this is to advise you of the option to opt-out of the next round of 5-year audit appointments.

All authorities require an appointed external auditor even if the authority meets the criteria to qualify for exemption, as a Certificate of Exemption is required to be submitted to the external auditor and the auditor must be in place in case of objections from local electors

The Clerk explained that if we chose to opt out then it should be noted that an opted-out authority regardless of size (including exempt authorities) **MUST** appoint an appropriate external auditor. The appointed auditor must be a registered auditor as defined by the Companies Act and a member of Institute of Chartered Accountants (England and Wales)

It was **resolved** that we would not opt out of the SAAA central external auditor appointment arrangements.

49. To discuss where we would like to spend the prize money from the Best Kept Village Competition.

Witham on the Hill had gained third prize in the Best Kept Village competition. As a result, we would receive a £200 prize. The Clerk explained that he put this matter on the agenda just in case we had a project we could spend that money on. We did not have to decide now but when a

project was to be considered they should let him know so an item could go onto the agenda. In the meantime, an email had been received inviting the Council to attend the presentation at 10am on Monday 24 October at the Wyndham Park Visitor Centre in Grantham (NG31 9BB). Unfortunately, no one was available to attend that day so the Clerk was to reply asking if they could send us the prize and we would arrange our own presentation and arrange for the local press to be present.

There was a discussion about possible projects and the main one related to the refurbishment of the Bywells which is a defining feature of the village and now in a dilapidated state. It was agreed that the prize money would be inadequate, so we would have to consider what possible grants we could obtain. The Clerk was asked to put this matter onto the November agenda.

50. To discuss the present position with the Mallard Pass Solar Farm proposal

The Clerk explained that he had let this on the agenda as there had been a large number of emails received from various parish councils and residents from other villages. All were against the proposal and the Leader of the Council Kelham Cooke had replied to some of them saying he and the Council were opposed to the proposal. The public consultation period had now finished and a final decision was going to be made by the Secretary of State. It was agreed that the Clerk would remove this item from future agendas.

51 To confirm Expenditure

£36.00 – APS (payroll services for April May & June)

£300.12 - B M Champness (salary for July, August and September)

£ 75.00 - HMRC (PAYE & NI)

£ 24.00 - APS (payroll services for July & August)

[] denotes those payments paid between meetings, which have been approved by the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Parish Council or at a previous meeting but not listed

Payments made by Direct Debit - £

It was **resolved** that the above payment be made. 34. **Any other business** – *Reminder – by law no decision can be made under this item only information exchanged.*

52. Any other business – *Reminder – by law no decision can be made under this item only information exchanged.*

The Clerk reminded the Council that at the next meeting we would be discussing the Precept for 2023/24 so if there were any projects to be considered now was the time to put them forward. There being no other business the meeting was formally closed at 20.11

53. The date of the next meeting – to be held on **Monday 7 November 2022** at 7.00 p.m. at St Andrew's Parish Hall, Witham on the Hill