

July Minutes

Witham on the Hill Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Witham on the Hill Parish Council (Min 21-02) held on the 12th July 2021 at 7.00 p.m. at St Andrews Parish Hall

Present: **Councillors:** Charles Henriques, Janet Kirkwood, and Paul Smith

Not present: Sue Pennant Jones

Others: Bernard Champness – Clerk

Open Forum

There were no residents present and the meeting was formally opened at 19.02

22. Apologies for absence, acceptance of Apologies

Apologies had been received from Lynne O'Hara(personal) **Resolved:** that the apologies be accepted.

23. **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.

24. Minutes of the last meeting held on the 6th May 2021 (21-01)

Resolved: That the minutes of the 6 May 2021 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

25. Matters to Report

Although Cllr O'Hara had sent her apologies she had sent a report on the meeting she had had with Mel Cummins (SKDC). The points raised were

1. The play area has been re-surfaced. (Issue raised by Mr Plews)
2. Mel is going to enquire further about improvements to the fort.
3. SKDC do not own the stocks or surrounding area. Mel recommends we register ownership.
4. My concern with our ownership is the cost of maintenance on the stocks and the trees (which look in need of care).
5. Lynn Land is responsible for trees on SKDC land and is to provide 2 trees (one blossom and one nut) for the village green in autumn

Following discussion of these points it was agreed that as item is added to the September agenda regarding ownership of the Stocks and The Bywells. It was pointed out that school children had been seen playing in the Stocks and climbing in the roof rafters. There was concern that someone might get hurt and this should be prevented if possible. It was agreed that a letter be sent to the school asking them to try and persuade children not to play in the Stocks as there was real concern about ownership of them.

Cllr Henriques said that he had been to Lloyds Bank and was able to ascertain that all Councillors were signatories except Cllr Smith. He had been able to print of a form which needed to be signed by Cllr Smith so that he could be included as a signatory. Cllr Smith signed the forms which would be sent to the bank. The Clerk asked if it was possible to have online banking facilities as this would make life so much easier as we could have total control and access to the accounts whereas at the moment someone had to either visit or telephone the bank for information. Cllr Henriques said that he would investigate this and report back to the Council

Cllr Henriques reported that the defibrillator was installed and working. He had registered this with the Ambulance Service so they could direct someone to the defibrillator by them in an emergency. It was suspected that we would get a request for a sign to be placed at the front of the building advising people where the defibrillator was sited. The Clerk was able to ascertain signs were available to purchase. Cllr Smith said that he had noticed that a sign was also needed in the defibrillator with a location code on view to the public. Again, the Clerk was able to find details that they were available, and Cllr Henriques would see if he could purchase one of each

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

No representative from either the County or District councils were in attendance and no reports had been sent, Thea Clerk was asked to ensure that the District Councillor, Penny Robins, was invited to attend the future meetings.

27. 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.

28. Planning applications:

Planning Applications to Approve:

S21/1272 - Proposal: Removal of maple tree at New Home Farm, Main Street, Witham On The Hill. **Response** by 14 July 2021. **Resolved:** that we have no comments.

After the agenda was posted another application was received which was **S21/1362** Proposal: T1 - ash - 4 lowest limbs to be removed over the footpath at Rag Rose, Bottom Street, Witham On The Hill. **Response** by 23 July 2021. The Clerk explained that we could either call a special meeting to deal with this application or give him delegated authority to respond. **Resolved:** that the Clerk be given delegated authority to respond. After considering the plan it was **Resolved** that we have no comments.

Planning Applications approved:

S21/0841 - Proposal: Reduce height of ash tree (T1) to 8m Reduce height of ash tree (T2) to 1m at Park House 2 Home Farm Lane

S21/1149 - Proposal: Copper Beech (T1) - reduce by 1.5m in height and width

Weeping Ash (T2) - Prune or Fell at The Old Vicarage Main Street.

S21/0917 - Proposal: Submission of details reserved by condition 4 (materials) of S20/1620

at Meadowside, Bottom Street

29. To receive an update on the reactive sign

Cllr Henriques was able to report that little had been progressed as he had been able to speak to a representative from County Speedwatch as some matters needed clarifying. He would continue to try and make contact but in the meantime the clerk would send him details of the Councillor at Thurlby Parish Council who dealt with their reactive sign.

30. To discuss whether or not to enter an agreement with P Langford to maintain the website for us at a cost of £15 per month but for the Clerk to retain responsibility of what is to go onto the website

The Clerk explained that he had reported before that the maintaining of the website was extremely complicated and he was being helped by Peter Langford. Peter was helping by putting up the agenda and minutes as well as the information regarding the Audit. Up until now he was doing this work free of charge, but he was working closely with LALC and many clerks had suggested that if he was going to help them throughout the year then he should be paid for that service. LALC had been advertising his services throughout Lincolnshire and felt that this service was one that could benefit all Council as the work need just to upload documents was complicated and vert time consuming. Peter together with LALC were trying to reach a satisfactory agreement on the level of charges that he should make. At first it was suggested £12 per month and then £15 but discussions were still on going and the latest suggestion was that for Councils that just needed Peter to do what he is doing for us now the charge should be £7.50 per month but this was not the final agreement. The Clerk said that he would urge the Council to agree in principle at this stage that we enter an agreement with LALC and Peter Langford that his services would be used but subject to a satisfactory level of fees being charged.

It was agreed that this matter be dealt with at the September meeting and in the meantime the Clerk would find out the cost of developing our own website and any on going cost involved.

31. To discuss the purchase of a laptop and to enter an agreement to purchase Office 365 every year thus meaning all council information and documents are transferred with the laptop to a new clerk.

The Clerk explained that he had placed this item on the agenda as he was of the view that the Parish Council should have their own laptop rather than expect the Clerk to provide this equipment and then not be paid by the Council for the use of the laptop and using his home as an office, Since he started working for the Council in 2015 he had used a memory stick which in itself was far from satisfactory as this could be lost or would not work which would mean that all data kept by the Clerk would be lost. In his Contract of Employment, it states in Para 10.4 which related to working from home that his expenses may include the following

10.4.1 Purchase or use of office equipment

10.4.2 Purchase of office consumables

The memory stick could not be used as the slots in the side of the laptop did not work.

If a laptop was purchased then we needed to purchase the appropriate software. At the moment he was using Office 365 which he has to pay for. Office 365 provided storage to save documents onto the Cloud. If he left this employment the new Clerk would then have the equipment and software to continue to run the council business. At the moment there was nothing in the contract that said he had to hand over the memory stick, which he had purchased with his own funds. He understood to purchase Office 365 it would cost £59.99 per annum and provided all the programmes that were needed and also allowed a large amount of storage on the Cloud.

Whilst discussing the Contract of Employment the Clerk pointed out that it states that the place of work is my home, so he has to travel to and from Thurlby to attend meetings and put-up notices

etc which is a total of 6 miles a time. He should be paid travel expenses incurred in the performance of Council business (Para 10.1) The present rate is 45p per mile.

It was agreed that this matter should be dealt with when all Councillors were present and this should be put onto the September agenda.

32. To discuss a letter from a resident regarding parish issues

An e-mail had been received from a resident who wanted to ask a number of questions regarding Parish issues which is below and with the agreed replies

1. I understand that agreement has been reached to buy one flashing speed sign for the village and I was wondering if this has now been bought and when this is going to be installed and where? *The purchase of a single reactive sign was mandated by the Council at the last meeting following LCC approval of locations proposed. The sign is mobile so its location can be changed periodically for best effect and therefore the Council felt the additional expenditure on a second was not required*
2. I don't believe these are that expensive to buy in flashing sign terms and wondered why only 1 and not 2 are being bought with approx. £10,000 in the parish account? *The recent purchase of a Defibrillator and the cost of a single reactive speed sign is adequately covered by our reserves, but these items will amount to circa £4,500 of costs not budgeted for when the last precept was agreed*
3. At the last count we have I believe, 4 public benches situated throughout the village, 2 on the main park, one on east green, and another situated on the main road out of the village towards the crossroads. These benches are all in need of preservation and all need re painting or staining. *We need to check who is responsible for maintaining this street furniture, but most likely it will be SKDC. Generally, we find the quickest way to get decoration works done is via direct action, which SKDC supports. Can we enquire if you would be willing to volunteer your services or organise a working party? We are confident the Parish Council would support payment for materials, but it would need to be agreed beforehand.*

On the child's play areas in the park, part of the rubber surface has lifted near to the circular play ring areas creating a hole in the rubber. *This work had now been completed as reported by Cllr O'Hara*

33. To discuss if we ask the Church to contribute to the cost of the Mole removal from the Churchyard

It was agreed that this matter be left in abeyance for the time being.

34. To confirm Expenditure

£2.68 – B M Champness (stamps)

£36.00 – Advanced Payroll Services (Payroll services for April, May and June)

£73.40 - HMRC (PAYE)

£294.16 – B M Champness (salary for April, May and June)

[£145.20 – Town & Country (fee to install defibrillator)]

[] 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

It was **resolved** that the above payment be made

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

. There being no other business the meeting was formally closed at 20.46

36. The date of the next meeting – to be held on **Monday 13th September 2021** at 7.00 p.m. at St Andrew's Parish Hall, Witham on the Hill