

March 2022 Minutes

Witham on the Hill Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Witham on the Hill Parish Council (Min 21-05) held on the 14 March 2022 at 7.00 p.m. at St Andrews Parish Hall

Present: **Councillors:** Charles Henriques, Sue Pennant-Jones, and Paul Smith

Residents: Gene Plews, Frances Plummer

Others: Bernard Champness – Clerk, and District Cllr Penny Robins

Open Forum

Frances Plummer wanted to ask some questions or raise concerns;

1. The top step by the Stocks was still not repaired. She was asked if she could report it on 'Fix My Street'
2. The broken metal post was still by the parking area on the Green. Cllr Henriques said he would try to find the time to take it to Bourne Recycling.
3. Was the Parish Council planning anything for the Platinum Jubilee and had there been any application for grants? Cllr Smith said he had matters to raise and would do so under Mattes to Report.

Gene Plews had the following points to raise;

1. He thanked the Parish Council for organising the reactive speed sign. This was now in front of his house and he noted that there were still instances of cars travelling too fast.
2. He was also concerned by the Mallard Pass Solar proposals and had attended a meeting at Ryhall Village Hall where many residents expressed the opinion the proposals were on an excessive scale. He was pleased the Council were making comments and monitoring the situation.
3. He was concerned by recent proposals to change local Parliamentary Boundaries. His primary concern was if we became part of Rutland that local Council Tax would increase and asked that the Parish Council should do whatever it could to resist this. Cllr Henriques said he was not aware of the proposal and questioned whether Parliamentary boundaries could affect County boundaries. D Cllr Penny Robins said she would investigate on our behalf.
4. He was also interested to know what plans the Parish Council might have for tree planting as part of the Jubilee commemoration and understood a grant may be available.

The meeting was formally opened at 19:21

69. Apologies for absence, acceptance of Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Janet Kirkwood (personal) and Cllr Lynne O'Hara

(health) **Resolved:** that the apologies be accepted. Apologies had also been received from County Cllr Charlotte Vernon.

70. 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.

71. Minutes of the last meeting held on the 1 November 2021 (21-04)

Resolved: That the minutes of the 1 November 2021 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

72. Matters to Report

Cllr Smith said he had attended a meeting of the Village Hall committee regarding the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations (as a resident). He reported that a Barn Dance was being organised and the question of whether the PC could help with lighting in the trees around the Green was raised. The Clerk said he was not sure if we had the authority to fund this but he would make enquiries.

There was discussion about whether the Petanque pit could be cleared and cleaned up and if the Parish Council could organise this. Cllr Henriques pointed out that it was his understanding that when this was initially installed by residents it was on the understanding that they would be responsible for future maintenance.

Regarding the planting of trees this would require the permission of the landowner and the Parish Council does not own any land in the village.

The question of arranging Jubilee commemorative mugs to be distributed to children in the village was raised, although it was noted there would be very few recipients.

The installation of a commemorative bench was another suggestion and whether the Parish Council would be prepared to fund this. The bench to be sited in front of the village hall.

Cllr Henriques said that the Bywells water course was now in serious need of repair. It appears that rats or rabbits had burrowed into the sides which were now collapsing into the gully and blocking the outflow. Meanwhile water was escaping on either side and finding its own way underground, which may explain the collapsed road surface nearby. He suggested that restoring the Bywells and Stocks could be a significant project of improvement in commemoration of the Jubilee, but this would need to be supported by independent fund raising and a scheme of works for costing needed to be prepared, which he would look into.

He also asked the Clerk to arrange for the moles to be dealt with on the Green by the company employed for the same job last year and also could they comment on the vermin issue in the Bywells.

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

County Cllr Charlotte Vernon was able to make a brief appearance before the meeting started to give her apologies but wanted to introduce herself, although she had nothing to report at this stage.

District Cllr Penny Robins reported as follows;

1 Following the scoping report submitted for the Mallard Pass solar project, the local authorities now has 28 days to give their feedback to the Planning Inspectorate (PI) Thereafter, the PI has a further 14 days to form their opinion of it. SKDC are responding using a lot of the points of concern raised by the Mallard Pass Action Group. Then a Planning Application will very likely follow, but as this is classed as a strategic infrastructure project SKDC is only a statutory consultee in the process. She suggested that the Parish keep feeding information and views to MPAG as this was the best way to get them noted.

2 Waste collections on Thursday and Friday over the extended Bank Holiday will still take place as normal.

3 The government has confirmed an extension of business rates relief to the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors.

4 From April parking in Stamford Bourne and Grantham will increase by 10p/hour.

5 The annual green bin fee is to be increased by £5.

6 The reasoning adopted in the grant of consent for planning application S21/2013, relating to the canopy at the Six Bells was something she would look into and report back to the Clerk shortly.

74. Clerks Report and Correspondence received.

The Clerk had circulated in advance a note 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.

75. Planning Applications to Approve:

S22/0273 – Proposal: Two storey side extension, installation of roof lights, erection of single garage and external staircase at rear of double garage. Insertion of first floor window on south elevation at Acorn House Main St. **Response** extended to 15th March 2022. **Resolved:** no objection

Planning Applications approved:

S21/1965 - Proposal: Ash trees (T1 & T13) – crown lift to 3m, Ash (T2, T3, T5 and T11) – Fell Lime (T4) – Crown lift to 3m, Yew (T6 & T7) – Fell Hawthorn (T10) Fell Oak (T12) at the Old Vicarage Main St.

S21/2471 - Proposal: Various works to trees at Witham Hall school Main St.

S21/2309 – Proposal: Single storey side extension to form self-contained annexe at Cedar House 3 Home Farm Lane.

S21/2013 – Proposal: Erection of canopy to front courtyard to provide covered dining area at the Six Bells Main St.

S21/2383 – Proposal: Maple (T1) – Reduce limbs over boundary wall and field by 1.5/2m to reduce weight on branch unions at the Old Vicarage Main St.

S22/0126 – Proposal: Works to Whitebeam tree at Longacre, main St.

76. To receive an update on the reactive sign and to agree payment by instalments

Cllr Henriques reported that the reactive sign was up and working and attached to a lamp post by East Green. No data had been collected so far but it was agreed the matter be an agenda item going forward.

77. To discuss the Mallard Pass Solar Farm proposal and what action if any we need to take.

The Clerk explained that this was on the agenda as although the Council had acted since the last meeting nothing was recorded on any decision that was taken. Since the last meeting Councillors and parishioners had expressed their concerns about the sheer size of the proposal. Although not adjacent to the village it was sufficiently close for concern about any possible future extension and secondary impacts such as traffic. Cllr Henriques has been in touch with the Mallard Pass Action Group, (MPAG) to express our concerns and confirm support and suggested all Councillors write individually on the same basis. Meantime the Clerk had received correspondence from MPAG in his capacity as Clerk to Turlby Parish Council. This has been distributed to all Councillors so they are up to date with what is happening. It was agreed the Council will continue to monitor the situation and take action when necessary, even if a special meeting was needed to be convened. District Cllr Penny Robins would also keep us informed of further developments.

78. To discuss the diary of meetings for the forthcoming year and to decide on a date for the Annual Parish Meeting and for the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The Clerk explained that he would not be available to attend the meeting in May and suggested a deferral until later in the month. It was resolved that the Annual Parish Meeting be held on Monday 23rd May, starting at 19.15. The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council would commence immediately after at 19.30. The remaining meetings would take place on the first Monday in July, September, November 2022, January and March 2023. The Clerk would arrange for the Hall to be booked for the meetings

79. To approve the appointment of David Thornburn as internal auditor for the audit of the accounts for 2021-2022

The Clerk explained he had been in touch with David Thornburn to see if he was prepared to do the work again this year. He would be delighted to assist. Resolved:- That David Thornburn be appointed internal auditor.

80. To discuss the proposed salary increase for the Clerk and for this to be back dated to 1st April 2021.

The Clerk reported that on 28th February an agreement was finally reached on the increase in Clerk's salaries and such increases back dated to 1st April 2021. The increase in the Clerk's salary for the last 12 months amounts to £30.24. Resolved: - That the Clerk's salary be increased accordingly. The present hourly rate would be increased from £10.24 to £10.42.

81. To discuss a request for financial help from LIVES.

A request for financial help has been received from LIVES. The Clerk explained that we could do so under s.137 but this stipulates that it must be of benefit to all residents. **Resolved:** - That we would not make a donation.

82. To discuss the proposed Parliamentary Boundary changes and whether we wish to comment on these proposals before 4th April.

The Clerk explained that Thurlby Parish Council would be affected in the same way and that their District Councillor was asking SKDC for a report on the likely impact this would have if the changes are adopted. He would be happy to share this feedback and suggested that if Thurlby called a special meeting to discuss it, we should join them. District Cllr Penny Robins would also look into the matter and report back to the Clerk.

83. To confirm expenditure

To confirm the following expenditure:

£2,814.00 – Unipart Dorman (Reactive speed sign)

£68.40 – Unipart Dorman (2x mounting plates for speed sign)

£61.27 – Wel Medical (replacement defibrillator pads)

£1.70 – BM Champness (postage)

£36.00 – APS (payroll services for Oct/Nov/Dec)

£79.60 – HMRC (PAYE)

£318.20 – BM Champness (salary Jan/Feb/March)

£70.00 – St Andrews Parish Hall, (annual hire charges)

[]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 - £0.00

Resolved: - That the above payments be made.

84. 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 20.47

85. The date of the next meeting – to be held on **Monday 23rd May 2022** at 7.30 p.m. being the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council, at St Andrew's Parish Hall, Witham on the Hill