

September Minutes

Witham on the Hill Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Witham on the Hill Parish Council (Min 21-03) held on the 13th September 2021 at 7.00 p.m. at St Andrews Parish Hall

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

Not present: Lynne O'Hara,

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

Open Forum

There were no residents present and the meeting was formally opened at 19:04

37. Apologies for absence, acceptance of Apologies

Apologies had been received from Sue Pennant-Jones **Resolved:** that the apologies be accepted.

38. **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.

39. Minutes of the last meeting held on the 12 July 2021 (21-02)

Resolved: That the minutes of the 12 July 2021 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

40. Matters to Report

Cllr Kirkwood said that people had been complaining about the overgrown nettles by the side of Elderwood Lane. People were worried that children may get stung whilst walking past. She wanted to know if there was anything that could be done to get them cut down.

Cllr Smith said that he understood that most trees in the village were protected by a tree preservation order. He understood that about 30 trees had been felled in the wood on the left as you approach the village up the hill from the A6121 crossroads. The Forestry Commission had been contacted and it was understood the police are investigating. It was pointed out that the trees in question were outside the village curtilage/conservation area and as such may not be protected by the usual planning rules.

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

District Councillor Penny Robins was welcomed to the meeting by the Chair. She thanked the Council for the invitation and would try to attend all out meetings. She was able to report on the following:

1. Both the County and District Councils had helped in assisting some Afghan refugees settle into the county.

2. Regarding Covid19 the present figures stated that 323 people in 100,000 were infected locally.
3. She would like to recommend Historic Grantham which was a new online walk around Grantham. If you log onto the website, it provides a commentary while you are guided round the walk. She will send the link to the Clerk.
4. Regarding the budget this year had been difficult and challenging.
5. New data breaches had come to light and had been investigated.
6. SKDC is making arrangements for 400 members of staff to return from working at home to the office. This was going to take a while as it will be on a phased basis.
7. Planning Services will be changing and are under review. She noted the planning applications on the agenda were minor and likely to be dealt with by the Planning Officer rather than full committee
8. She was able to give an update on the health of Cllr Bob Adams and the Council wished him well.
9. Cllr Robins said that her first job had been helping a resident in the village to be rehoused successfully.

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:

Planning Applications to Approve:

S21/1742 - Proposal: Remove Maple tree (T1) in front garden to just above ground level, Reduce Pissard's Plum (T2) by 2m. at Cedar House, 3 Home Farm Lane, **Response** by 17 September 2021. **Resolved:** no comment

S21/1745 - Proposal: Reduce spread of 3 neighbouring Ash trees (T3, T4 & T5) back to the Boundary at Somersby House, Main Street. **Response** by 17 September 202. **Resolved:** no comment

S21/1746 - Proposal: Reduce height of the Ash tree (T6) by 3m and reduce spread by 1.5m to shape crown at Park House, 2 Home Farm Lane. **Response** by 17 September 2021. **Resolved:** no comment

Planning Applications approved:

S21/1176 - Proposal: Erection of storage and workshop building at Witham Hall Preparatory School Main Street

S21/1362 - Proposal: T1 - ash - 4 lowest limbs to be removed over the footpath.
at Rag Rose Bottom Street

S21/1272 - Proposal: Removal of maple tree at New Home Farm Main Street

44. To receive an update on the reactive sign

Cllr Henriques reported he had again been in touch with the company who are to supply the sign to clarify invoicing arrangements, payment and a delivery date. Progress has been slow due to holidays and the disruption caused by the pandemic. In the meantime, he had received 6 static signs from the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership which could now be deployed around the village. Both he and Cllr Smith will undertake this shortly.

45. To discuss the present website and whether we wish to have our own website developed and the cost of this and maintaining it

Ian Bratley had been contacted to quote for developing a website like the one for Thurlby Parish Council or the current site which is hosted by Lincolnshire County Council. He had replied stating that to develop a website like Thurlby Parish Council would cost in the region of £400.00. There would be an additional cost of £11 per annum for the registration and renewal of a new domain name. In addition, the hosting fee would be £144 per annum payable annually. For a website like the present website this would cost in excess of £1900.00. The Clerk reminded Councillors that the present site was being provided free of charge by Lincolnshire County Council with no other annual costs. As the Clerk explained at the July meeting, uploading documents onto the website was difficult and he had been approached by Peter Langford for help to do this. Whilst that service was provided free of charge this was no longer the position. See item 46 below.

46. 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

This matter was adjourned at the July meeting to this meeting. The Clerk was able to explain that there had been a development since that meeting. Mr Langford had now reached an agreement with LALC to work in association with their members on the basis of an agreed price structure depending on the assistance required. The premium service is £15 per month and the basic service £5 per month both exclusive of VAT. If the premium service was chosen then Mr Langford would do all the work to maintain and upload documents subject to instructions from the Clerk. The basic service is advisory only with no active involvement.

The only other proviso was that the Council had to be a member of LALC which in itself would involve an annual fee. Mr Langford has been providing help free of charge until now which has been much appreciated, however given the agreement he has reached with LALC he can no longer do this. The Clerk reported that although it had taken him 45 mins he had been able to upload the agenda for this meeting and the minutes of the July meeting and was more confident that he would be able to do this going forward. In the event of any difficulties, he would still be able to get help from the IT department at LCC.

Therefore, his current advice was that no further action need be taken and we could continue to use the existing website. So it was agreed that this matter, and the matter in Item 45 above, be left in abeyance.

47 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.

It was agreed that the Clerk would now find out the cost of a laptop, Office 365 and a printer. The matter would be discussed again at the November meeting.

48. To discuss Verge cutting - Bottom St and thistle problem

A resident had contacted Cllr Henriques about excluding the verge in front of his property from the contractors cutting schedule, as he wanted to encourage self-seeded wild flowers. The Clerk had

emailed residents in the immediate vicinity asking them to comment on the proposal. While there were no strong objections it was pointed out that the verge needed more active management to prevent it looking untidy.

Cllr Henriques reported that he had received requests for help, from some residents whose gardens were being infested with spear thistle seeds from the pasture on the southwestern side of the village. He had spoken to the landowner and was informed there were limited options to deal with this given the land was in a low input grassland scheme and the time of year. It was agreed that the land owner be contacted again early next year to request that preventative steps be taken.

49. To receive an update on suggested work being carried out throughout the village by a resident

At the July meeting following a question raised by a resident it was agreed that we would support voluntary work to redecorate the various benches around the Green, as this would be quicker than relying on SKDC to schedule the work. The council noted that another bench has been redecorated since then, by Martyn Hyde. The council wished to express their thanks and will be happy to reimburse the cost of materials.

50. To discuss a request that we purchase a Poppy Wreath and to appoint someone from the Parish Council to attend the Remembrance Day Service and lay the wreath

The matter was discussed and it was agreed that although this had not been done for many years, we should commemorate Remembrance Day. It was agreed that a wreath would be purchased that could be laid at the Service on Remembrance Sunday and Cllr Smith would attend to perform this task. In addition, it was agreed that we would purchase poppies to be placed on lamp-posts in the village subject to availability. It was **resolved** that we set aside £150 to meet the anticipated cost. Cllr Henriques was in touch with a resident who worked for the Royal British Legion, who had offered to help in this regard.

51. To confirm Expenditure

£36.00 – Advanced Payroll Services (Payroll services for July, August & September)

£73.60 - HMRC (PAYE)

£293.96 – B M Champness (salary for July, August, and September)

[] *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

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

It was reported that building work was being carried out at a property in the village which adjoins the roadway. Ladders and scaffolding were not being secured at night and neither was access to the actual building site. This was considered to be potentially hazardous and there was concern that children could climb the ladders or scaffolding and hurt themselves. It was considered that the site should really be left at the end of the day fenced off and made safe. It was discussed whether this was a Parish Council matter or for the Health and Safety Executive. This would take time to follow up, but if a Councillor wanted to approach the developer as a concerned resident,

rather than a Parish Councillor to raise these concerns this would be a more practical way to deal with the issue.

There being no other business the meeting was formally closed at 20.25

53. The date of the next meeting – to be held on **Monday 8th November 2021** at 7.00 p.m. at St Andrew's Parish Hall, Witham on the Hill