

Westerleigh Parish Council
Minutes of Full Council meeting
December 14 2015, Manor Hall

Present:

Councillors: B Taylor (chair), J Butler, A Gibbs, A Fay, D Boulton, M Crumpton, S Blackmore, G Jancey

1879. Apologies for absence Cllr C Nicholls, Fiona Thornton (Clerk)

In the absence of the Clerk it had been agreed that Cllr J Butler would take the minutes in conjunction with a recording of the meeting.

1880. Declarations of Interest under the Localism Act 2011

Cllr Jancey asked about declarations and the changes to the agenda, since he had a personal interest in item 16. Cllr Taylor confirmed that under our current Standing Orders he would be allowed to stay in the room.

Cllr Butler declared a personal interest in the budget item relating to Council's donation to the Manor Hall (agenda item 9)

1881. Reports from South Gloucestershire Councillors on matters relating to the Parish

District Councillor C Young reported:

Planning issues

Policies, Sites and Places (PSP) Plan

The consultation runs until 8th January. Some people have found it difficult to access the documents. To use the online response form, you need to register with the council's consultation system and log in. In the list of current consultations, click on "South Gloucestershire Local Plan: Policies, Sites and Places Plan - Regulation 18 Consultation (2015)", which is one of the featured consultations near the top of the page. If you then click on the link that says "Regulation 18 Consultation document (inc. additional housing allocations) [online response version]", you will be taken to the first page of the document. You can access specific sections using the links down the side and there are boxes in which you can type your answers to the questions interspersed throughout the document.

The issue of how the updated version of "Planning policy for traveller sites" (PPTS) issued on 31st August 2015 would affect the PSP was raised at a previous Parish Council meeting. I met officers to discuss this in more detail and it was apparent that the policy is more nuanced than the headlines would suggest. It is covered in Section 11 of the PSP consultation document. That explains that South Glos is responding by doing a refresh of its evidence base, the Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) 2013. This can then be used to ensure that the policy approach proposed in the PSP is compliant with the latest national policy.

Top Yard

Originally it was intended that these appeals would be dealt with by written representations, but the Planning Inspectorate have decided that a hearing would be most suitable. A revised timetable has been issued, with appeal statements being due in January 2016. As the appeal is currently in progress, the enforcement notice has not yet come into effect and whether it does so is dependent on the outcome of the appeals.

Athelstan House

The application for an agricultural building, to which the Parish Council objected, was approved by the DC (East) committee with an additional landscaping condition.

Beech Hill Farm

The applicants have appealed against the council's refusal of the application for the continuation of the caravan storage.

Kendleshire Golf Course

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The application was refused.

19 Heath Gardens

Following concerns raised by neighbours, I discussed this with our spokesperson on DC (East), who referred it to the planning committee. The site visit will take place at approximately 11.05am on Friday 18th December and the application is likely to be considered at the committee on 14 January.

Planning enforcement

I have had confirmation from SGC legal services that they are currently working with the planning officers to review the council's procedures covering when information about planning matters can be shared by SGC councillors with other parties. This work should be concluded in the near future and it will provide a useful starting point for helping councillors to determine when information may be shared with other parties. Like any procedure, it will have a general application and will still require councillors to consider cases on an individual basis. Councillors will always be expected to make such considerations in accordance with their own obligations under data protection legislation.

Kendleshire Crossroads

Highways officers have had a meeting to discuss Kendleshire crossroads but no proposals can be confirmed until the capital programme is approved in the spring.

Badminton Road resurfacing

I raised with a senior officer complaints regarding the quality of the road surface following the patching work carried out on Badminton Road. I was assured that next summer that whole stretch of road will have a dressing that will take out the irregularities. Concerns were also raised with me about the stretch of road to the south of the traffic lights. Officers agree it is very bad and it is already in the programme of works for next year. It will be locally reconstructed and then resurfaced in the summer of 2016, with a budget of £300K earmarked for it. They will probably have to undertake some small scale patching and pot hole fixing in the next six months just to keep it from deteriorating much further.

Roads around the Manor School

Officers have prepared consultation reports on the 20mph speed limit and revised parking restriction proposals and these will be made available shortly. Both schemes will then progress to formal advertisement of the Traffic Regulation Orders. This involves placing notices in the local paper as well as on lighting columns in the affected area, giving people an opportunity to formally object to or support the proposed schemes. Depending on the outcome, works would begin on site shortly after the TROs have been signed and sealed. However if objections are received, the schemes will have to go to the Planning Transport and Strategic Environment Committee for a decision on how to proceed.

Rail electrification and biodiversity

At the Area Forum, I spoke to a Network Rail representative about how the need to cut back vegetation along the railway because of electrification will affect our area. I am now engaged in ongoing email correspondence with him and will update the Parish Council when I know more.

Vegetation on Badminton Road railway viaduct

Officers and I have been chasing Network Rail for confirmation that they have plans in place to deal with the vegetation growing out of the brick work. I will provide an update when I have one.

Yate Spur cycle path

Officers are intending to construct the short length of path from the recently constructed refuge on Westerleigh Road around the corner to the bus stop on Kidney Hill, immediately after the Christmas break (commencing around 4 January for about 4 weeks).

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Given the magnitude of the works they are not intending to carry out a full consultation but are planning to do a letter drop to the residents opposite to make them aware. Details of the proposal have been shown to the Cycle Forum and no adverse comments have been received.

Questions arising: Cllr Jancey asked about decisions re enforcement actions being spoken about publicly or not - Cllr Young explained that this is currently under review.

1882. Reports from representatives of other bodies

None

1883. Confirm minutes of meeting held 2nd November 2015

Proposed by Cllr Gibbs and seconded by Cllr Fay the minutes were approved and signed.

1884. Matters arising

None

1885. Finance - approve payment of accounts

Postponed to just before item 16 as Cllr Jancey wished the public to be excluded as he wanted to discuss items relating to employee's salary.

1886. Council to agree revised budget and to discuss works in relation to Bitterwell Lake and Pansy Vale

Cllr Taylor explained the figures - Cllr Jancey again asked for the public to leave but Cllr Taylor expressed concern about budget decisions being taken in private.

Cllr Blackmore suggested discussing all the rest of the budget with the public present which was agreed.

Cllr Crumpton felt the budget for training should be increased - she already has 2 courses booked for January. Cllr Boulton asked whether Council had agreed to pay for these and Cllr Taylor explained that he was aware of them being booked.

Suggested increase to £500 for this year.

Cllr Jancey suggested the maintenance donation to the Manor Hall be kept in Council's bank account to be called off as required rather than paid up front. Cllr Taylor pointed out that this wasn't relevant at this point since we were only deciding on whether it should be included in the budget, and Cllr Butler explained that this year's has already been paid, and mostly spent, hence no adjustment possible for this year.

Cllr Gibbs felt that the Pound would need some money spent within the next 12 months.

Final decision postponed till later.

1887. Council to set and agree budget 2016/17

Cllr Taylor explained the figures again - Cllr Jancey asked for an increase in the budget for councillor training to £1000 - all agreed.

Cllr Taylor talked about the community benefit fund and asked whether we still need the £7000 in for the S 137 payments. Cllr Butler suggested keeping it for small grants which was agreed, with community benefit for more major projects.

Again due to Cllr Jancey's request for the public to be excluded the final decisions were postponed.

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1888. Council to agree precept sum 2016/17

Cllr Taylor outlined pros and cons of increasing the precept.

Cllr Jancey said should increase, Cllr Crumpton pointed out possibility of requirement to fund PCSOs, Cllr Butler pointed out possibility of future capping. Consensus was to go for the 2% increase - final decision and vote again postponed.

1889. Council to respond to PSP plan

Cllr Taylor explained the background following South Glos information meeting - sites for 1500 new homes needed over the next 5 years.

Local Green Spaces: we nominated about 10 - landowners now being asked to confirm agreement. Do we want to confirm all our nominated spaces?

Proposed by Cllr Fay and seconded by Cllr Boulton - all agreed.

PSP plan: Cllr Taylor read through list of questions and suggestions from South Glos - do we agree with their assessments of possible sites? Cllr Jancey suggested no comment - Cllr Blackmore agreed. Cllr Boulton mentioned empty houses which should be used before building new ones. Cllr Fay said brownfield sites should also be considered. Consensus was for just these comments to be posted with no answers on their methodology of choosing sites.

Proposed by Cllr Gibbs, seconded by Cllr Fay, all in favour.

1890. Update on Youth Services working group

Cllr Jancey had attended the November meeting in place of Cllr Crumpton so summed up the situation - tender invites have been sent out to 3 possible organisers but quotes are still awaited. Apparently several other youth clubs are already operating in the area.

Cllr Crumpton had attended a further meeting in December and confirmed still no responses had been received so the 3 organisations will be asked for their reasons with hopefully answers in time for next full Council meeting (of Frampton) in January. Might be a possibility of alternative options for youth services.

1891. Manor Hall Rate Relief Update

Cllr J Butler read out a statement explaining that Cllr Jancey's claim to have been trying to help the Manor Hall Trust when questioning their business rates rebate appeared to be a deliberate attempt to mislead the Parish Council, since the information from the business rates department clearly contradicted this. Since Cllr Crumpton had supported Cllr Jancey's claim she was also implicated.

Cllr Butler reminded Council of the past history of harassment of the Trust by these two, mainly prior to their election as councillors, and pointed out that since becoming Westerleigh Parish Councillors they should be bound by the terms of the lease between the Council and the Trust. This clearly states that the Trustees should be allowed to operate in peace, and she hoped that this would be respected in future.

1892. Council to confirm Night Bus Contribution at £800

After a brief discussion this was proposed by Cllr Crumpton and seconded by Cllr Blackmore, all in favour.

1893. Items of report

Cllr Crumpton started talking about the questions raised by Mrs Buston at the last meeting - who objected to this being discussed in public. Cllr Butler asked whether it had any relevance to the Parish Council but

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Cllr Taylor confirmed that as he'd removed the item from the overcrowded agenda, he had agreed that Cllr Crumpton could make a statement with no discussion, which she did.

Cllr Crumpton clarified her sources of information and explained that without more detail from Mrs Buston she was unable fully to answer her questions. She also confirmed that she was not the original complainant and had not abused her position. She was unsure what law Mrs Buston thought might have been broken and therefore felt unable to advise her on any particular course of action.

Cllr Taylor then asked the public to leave but Mr Bracey queried whether they should be allowed to stay for any decision on the Clerk's salary. Cllr Taylor explained that we would not be deciding her salary, just the budget provision for it. The public then departed.

1894. Return to budget discussions

Agenda item 7: Cllr Jancey asked how the Clerk's SSP is calculated, and queried who had produced the figures for payments to be approved. Cllr Blackmore pointed out that most of the payments were regular bills which would have been dealt with very simply. Cllr Butler confirmed that the Clerk's contract shows she is entitled to 5 months sick leave on full pay, although Cllrs Crumpton and Jancey had found a contract on the Council website which is different - Cllr Crumpton felt we should have access to the correct one. Cllr Taylor agreed to make enquiries.

Cllr Jancey also felt we should have sight of the Clerk's sicknote - proposed by Cllr Crumpton, seconded by Cllr Jancey, agreed.

Cllr Jancey still queried whether the Clerk should be doing any work and therefore asked again who produced the figures for payment. Cllr Crumpton stressed that we need to see the sicknote to decide whether the Clerk should be doing such work.

Cllr Taylor proposed payments be passed, seconded by Cllr Butler. Cllr Jancey asked for a named vote - Cllrs Taylor, Butler, Boulton, Gibbs, Blackmore and Fay in favour, Cllrs Crumpton and Jancey against. Motion passed - Cllrs Boulton and Butler signed relevant documents.

Agenda item 8 - Cllr Jancey questioned the increase in hours agreed for the Clerk and whether this should be considered a pay rise. Suggested asking ALCA for advice on hours required to do the job.

Cllr Blackmore suggested agree budget figure as this is for a clerk, not any specific person. Agreed.

Pansy Vale: discussion about how much work needs to be done - proposed that Council should offer to pay for just minimum work necessary, therefore new quotations needed.

Proposed by Cllr Jancey, seconded by Cllr Blackmore, all agreed. Budget figure therefore revised to £2000.

Cllr Crumpton suggested possibly offering the land for sale to the householders. Cllr Taylor to investigate further.

Bitterwell Lake: budget figure agreed

Cllr Crumpton suggested separate budget figure for contingency money to cover sick leave - eg £5000 from the sum proposed for Pansy Vale.

Cllr Jancey proposed revised budget accepted, seconded by Cllr Crumpton, all agreed.

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Bitterwell Lake: Cllr Blackmore thought all looks OK - Cllr Taylor pointed out questions raised by Terry Smith re vulnerable people. Suggestion made that gate is to be kept locked while they're on site – no objections to this.

Proposed by Cllr Blackmore, seconded by Cllr Crumpton, that works be carried out as per quotations, all agreed.

Agenda item 9. Draft budget for 2016/17 - contingency amount again to be listed separately from Clerk's salary.

Councillor training budget to be increased to £1000

Proposed by Cllr Gibbs, seconded by Cllr Fay, all agreed, budget accepted.

Agenda item 10. Precept: 2% increase as suggested - Cllr Jancey proposed, Cllr Boulton seconded, all agreed.

1895. Grievance Panel

The Chairman confirmed that a formal complaint has been received from the Clerk regarding two Council members and it was identified during debate that one of those members is in the process of lodging a formal complaint against the Clerk.

Suggested that Grievance Panel consist of Cllrs Taylor, Blackmore and Gibbs - agreed by all (excluding Cllrs Crumpton and Jancey)

Cllr Taylor finished by updating Council on options re locum Clerk services. Cllr Blackmore offered to take over responsibility for making further enquiries.

Proposed by Cllr Crumpton, seconded by Cllr Boulton, all agreed.

1896. Date of next meeting Full Council 11th January 2016 Westerleigh Village Hall

Signed: Date: 18th January 2016