

WHITCHURCH VILLAGE COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH OF WHITCHURCH HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21st APRIL 2021

Present: Cllrs: N Kirk (Chairman), S Bryant, R Chandler, M Dury, J Fox, P O'Leary, P Orchard, J Pearce, V Perry, Mrs S Dyer (Clerk) & District Councillor Paul May

2021/01 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING 3rd APRIL 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2019, were agreed and will be signed as a true record of the meeting by Mr N Kirk - (Chairman)

2021/02 WVCA REPORT

A response received from the Chair of the WVCA was read out, stating she did not wish to give a report and hope that we understand as they are volunteers their time is better spent dealing with the continuous work load of running the hall. Anyone wishing to know about the WVCA are welcome to attend their AGM if they wish to find out more.

Several Councillors stated that they thought this was a poor response as we should be working together for the benefit of all the village.

2021/03 CHAIRMANS REPORT - N Kirk

2020 was a very difficult year with all of the usual activities such as Have a Field day, 75th Anniversary celebrations, Christmas lights switch on and litter picks, unable to take place.

Throughout the year we have persevered with holding all meetings remotely.

Sue & Richard Dean opened as a grocery shop during the start of the pandemic and the village council organised volunteers to shop for those in need, picking up food and medical supplies, many people also did this for their neighbours, a huge thank you to all of those people.

The refurbishment of the Playpark took place with adverse weather and Covid 19 hampering the work at times, but we eventually got through it and it has been very well received since it has been reopened.

Although it has been a hard year, the Council has done very well, one councillor resigned and Joseph Fox has recently been co-opted to bring the Council to its full capacity of members.

I would like to give my thanks for the hard work Sue and her able assistants Maureen and Jane have put in during this last challenging year.

2021/04 FINANCE REPORT – N Kirk - Chair Finance Committee

Finance Report for the Year to 31st March 2021

The total receipts for the year amounted to 255,983.41 at the same time expenditure came in at £216,494.78, the increase in both of these was mostly due to the income and expenditure incurred with the Playpark refurbishment.

The balance in hand stands at 254,646.10 including the following:-

CiL funds: £137,018.12

Section 106 funds £8,756.43 (most of which will be spent on the ground works at the Playpark)

Cemetery income increased to £43,500.00 which is again greater than anticipated. .

Looking to the future it would be unrealistic to expect cemetery expenditure to remain consistently at this higher level.

A Reserves Policy has been recently agreed with £80,000 has been set aside for future cemetery maintenance when required and £30,000.00 earmarked for general reserves.

We are awaiting a VAT refund of £18,027.46.

As part of our continuing focus of retaining a viable financial position, it was agreed that we should raise the precept by £1,000 to £38,000, this will be a decrease of .49p per annum on Band D properties and a reduction of all other bands.

A new bank account has been set up during the last year which enables online banking, which is proving to be an asset to running the finances.

All Councillors need to be able to authorise payments and training can be organised for those who need it.

Finally the Finance Committee has complied with requirements to meet via zoom at regular intervals throughout the year to monitor expenditure against budget and report this back to the full council.

Cllr J Pearce stated that it was a very good move that the Village Council part of the Community Tax was slightly reduced this year.

2021/05 FIELD AND CEMETERY REPORT – P O’Leary – Chair Playfield/Cemetery/Allotment Committee

As a result of Covid 19 we have only held one meeting since November 2019 which took place on 13th January 2021. Due to the resignation of the previous Chairman Matt Donovan, it was resolved that I (Paul O’Leary) would be the new Chair of this committee.

The Playpark refurbishment and post installation inspection reports have been completed and the park reopened to the public on 26th March 2021, although some areas of the field are closed off due to the reseeded of the grass from the damage caused during refurbishment work. The refurbishment included replacing all play equipment, building a Muga and installing a table tennis table as well as new tarmac paths being installed. The Playpark Refurbishment was funded by S106 funding allocated from the Barratt Development off Sleep Lane. Since reopening the park has been very busy.

The cemetery income for 2020/2021 is £43,500.00 this is £12,000.00 more than the previous year, the cemetery continues to be a valuable source of revenue for the Village Council. The cemetery is kept in good order due to the work of our contractor. We were starting to run out of cremation plots so after receiving a quote from Lee Gillam we advised him to go ahead with constructing the new cremation area. This work has been completed and is ready for use.

Following a tree inspection carried out in September 2020, 4 Ash trees needed removing by a Tree Surgeon, this has also been recently completed.

2021/06 PLANNING AND TRAFFIC REPORT – T Griffin – Chair Planning & Traffic Committee

Because of the Covid pandemic, the Annual Meeting for 2019/20 did not take place, and therefore there was no report required.

- The West of England JSP was rejected by the Inspector who did not consider the decisions for c2500 houses to be built in the Whitchurch area to be sound.
- The JSP has now been withdrawn & replaced by a Spatial Development Strategy’ (SDS), with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA - South Glos, BANES, Bristol) responsible for the high- level plans. These HLP’s will give ‘broad locations’ where growth will take place – no specifics.
- Local Plans will be completed by Local Authorities & are structured into Growth, Renewal, & Protected (renewal = small scale development)
- BANES are in the process of updating their Local Plan and the impact of this is unknown.
- They have indicated that it is unlikely for Whitchurch to take more development, but this is unconfirmed.
- We need to be watchful and Paul May, our Local Councillor, continues to engage with WECA & BANES

- We have objected to the 'Public Consultations' called during the National Lockdowns because of the difficulty to properly & fully engage with the public.
- We have indicated we are willing to work with local action groups, whilst ensuring we formulate non-political views.
- The position of the Village Council remains unchanged i.e.
 - We do not want further incursion into Green Belt
 - We do not want our play park & allotments site to be turned into a road / roundabout.
 - We do not want to become an urban extension to Bristol
 - We want to retain our village culture & identity
 - We do not wish to see further flooding in our area which already has problems at times.
 - Any Transport Plan must be joined up to any Housing plan
- One current planning application we must keep an eye on is the Resourceful Energy Anaerobic Ltd at Queen Charlton Quarry. The effect of this expansion would dramatically increase the number of heavy lorries on our local roads & would be a complete disaster. We have objected on environmental & road safety grounds
- Transport / Roads
 - The plan to place a road (corridor) through greenbelt & create worse congestion where it joins the existing Whitchurch Lane from Washing Pound Lane is still on the table.
 - We will continue to object strongly on the grounds of non - sustainability and environmental impact.
 - With BANES declaring an 'Environmental Emergency', & the economic challenges facing the country during and after the Covid pandemic, it is difficult to see how such vast expenditure can be justified.
 - Road congestion has eased during the pandemic, but inevitably will return.
 - Speeding cars & lorries remain a problem, especially on A37, Staunton Lane and Maggs Lane
 - We have highlighted to BANES the junction of Woollard Lane & A37 as a prime concern.

The Government has issued a White Paper on planning, which is being drip fed into local authorities. With the help of Paul May, we must continue to engage with BANES & WECA, and ensure we do not miss any developing matters that will affect our Village.

2021/07 ALLOTMENT (Community Gardens) REPORT – T Griffin – Chair WVCG

NB The requirement to issue a report for 2019 / 2020 was waived because of the Covid pandemic.

Site

- ✚ The play park upgrade commenced Autumn 2020 and as a result plot -holders were unable to access the WVCG site until end March 2021. This meant the usual preparation of plots could not take place over this period. The Village Council kindly acknowledged this by reducing the annual rental from £25 to £20.
- ✚ Sue Dyer & Tony Griffin concluded that the H&S reports could be reduced from quarterly to half yearly with open dialogue between WVCG & VC continuing, including on site meetings in case of need.
- ✚ Any plots that are not utilised in accordance with the agreement are discussed with the VC clerk reminding plot holders of their obligations. This pro- active approach has worked with several neglected plots.

Impact of Covid 19

- ✚ During the pandemic, plot holders were able to attend to their plots, whilst respecting the government guidelines. However, since March 2019, WVCG have been unable hold the usual meetings or socials, which we hope will return in the summer, if able to do so.
- ✚ There have been no working parties or socials, but thanks to the hard work over the years there have been no issues to address.

Regulatory, Financial & Social

- ✚ An AGM was held in February 2020 with Constitution & Rental Agreements revised & updated.
- ✚ We aim to hold an AGM as soon as we can this year.
- ✚ Finances stand at c £370 & accounts independently reviewed annually by a former plot-holder.

Plans for 2021/22

- ✚ Maintain good appearance of site & plots via working parties & regular reviews.
- ✚ Continue the open positive relationship between WVCG & WVC
- ✚ In collaboration with WVC, consider raising the height of fence between playpark & allotments to improve security.

We are, as ever, very grateful to the ongoing support of Whitchurch Village Council

R Chandler explained that she has had people from allotments in Stockwood collecting manure from her and they advised that the allotments in Whitchurch Village are much cheaper than they pay.

2021/08 WARD COUNCILLORS REPORT – Paul May

1. Introduction.

This has been an unusual year due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

During the first lockdown from the start of the year Banes Council activity became all but frozen but when things improved new ways of working were introduced which allowed for virtual zoom meetings to take place.

Part of my duties is to report regularly to the Village Council and this has been in virtual mode as well, I have not missed any meetings. The Parish Council has been consistent in its support for my role and I wish to record my thanks for that.

2. Working with the community re development.

The JSP was overturned which created some planning issues for Banes and the other Local authorities within the WECA area because the strategic planning role has now been allocated to WECA but in the short term Banes has had to revise and update its existing Local Plan which included the 200 new homes within the village. As these have all been delivered I raised with the planners that the village should not take further development which has been confirmed by them. Developers will challenge this line at a planning inquiry. The Banes planned update is due in May 2021.

WECA has carried out a formal consultation exercise in relation to their new planning role so working together with the South Bristol Wrong road group, our own Whitchurch Village Action Group and The Bristol City councillor Tim Kent group in Bristol. We held a public zoom meeting to advise people how to respond to the document and the WVAG encouraged people to make sure they continued to engage.

We are pressing for proper consultation before the WECA, SDS is produced late 2021.

Banes have given me their categoric commitment that they expect the SDS to be non-specific re housing numbers and locations so they will consult with us moving forward. In fairness to the council cabinet member Councillor Tim Ball he has been involved and consulted with the village at every stage as he promised. The original Government figures for the Council area just could not be delivered so I engaged with our MP Jacob Rees –Mogg to review the allocation which was very successful. The pandemic has meant it is difficult for too many meetings so there has been some risks re keeping the groups effective and communicating issues with the community effectively.

After the May WECA elections I will be preparing and with the Parish support delivering a newsletter to all residents.

3. Banes issues locally.

Banes started a project re liveable neighbourhoods where they aim to reduce the emphasis on cars and support the community use of cycling and public transport. I submitted working with the parish a detailed analysis of the impact of traffic on the village. The Village Council need for a pedestrian crossing to their reformed play area was an agreed priority.

Staunton Lane was in a terrible surface state and pressure was put on for it to be re surfaced.

The volume of HGVs on Maggs Lane was reported.

Speeds on the A37 during lockdown resulted in police action in support of residents. An awkward A37 noise issue was dealt with twice.

The holding pond on the new Bellway development caused safety concerns and fencing has been erected as a result of my concerns.

Many new residents on the Horseworld site experienced refuse collection problems which were taken up on an individual basis.

I supported a resident who had planning problems successfully.

4. Working with the Parish Council.

The Parish have an active, effective council with a number of recent new members. I will continue to work with them re the challenges re housing in the future because we have shown everyone that “the village does have a voice” and with such active volunteers we will continue to our best for the community.

The Chairman thanked Paul for his report.

2021/09 POLICE REPORT

A report has not been received, the Clerk asked for this recently so probably did not give enough notice for one to be submitted.

2021/10 QUESTIONS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Clerk stated that a resident has e-mailed the council as the Toby Carvery carpark has been closed off at present and asking if we can speak to them about opening up for residents to park. It was agreed that as it is a private car park this is not within our remit.

Paul May explained that he has tried to obtain further information regarding the closure of Sturminster Road, in Stockwood, which is causing traffic issues in and around Whitchurch Village. It seems as though Bristol City Council have not advised B&NES of this closure or the diversions in place through the village.

Meeting Closed at 8.00p.m.