

Draft Minutes

Minutes of Witham Friary Parish Council Meeting on Zoom 6th August 2020

Present: Hugo Brooke (Chairman) (HB), Colin Horstmann (CH), John Knowles (JK), Marcus Powell (MP) and five members of the Public.

Apologies for absence

Council Members: Will Shepherd (WS), Fred Nicholls (FN)

Witham Working Group: Maddy Ferrari (MF)

Declarations of Interest

None

Minutes of the PCM on 9th July 2020

The minutes of the last meeting were passed, after a discussion about whether the quote by Nick Hutton was accurately recorded. HB assured the meeting that the correct version would be in the minutes he signed.

Comments from the Public

District Councillor Michael Gay raised two points;

1. Govt has announced that money is available for green improvements to homes. Govt will provide up to two thirds of the cost of insulation, draught exclusion, etc., even replacement of boilers. £2Bn is to be made available available watch, so watch out for it. People need to apply for an assessment as soon as possible as the money will be allocated on a first come basis. Trust Pilot (?) will run the scheme.

2. Planning Law Changes. It is being proposed by Govt that Building Control will decide on planning permissions in future, without any requirement to consult local authorities. Local Councils need to register protection of certain areas to prevent building on land they own. Witham Friary needs to protect areas such as the playing field, but it is not clear at the moment how to apply for such protection. We should keep a good look out for developments.

Planning Applications

2020/1240/FUL Oak Strap Lane.

After some discussion, including a briefing from Mr Tregay of the architects, the council voted to approve the application 4 – 0. **(Action HB)**

The Re-wilding Situation in Witham Friary

Following press interest in the alleged illegal release of wild animals onto WF land, HB said he had approached Avon & Somerset Police for clarification of the situation. Police Constable Pete Wills had responded that he was looking into the possible illegal release of wild animals into the Parish and would come back to us on that.

HB proposed that, since Mr Goldsmith is rewilding his land and thereby attracting wildlife to his farm, he be asked to fence off Cannwood Farm from WF land, with immediate effect.

(Action HB)

Beth Horstmann said she thought there was little we can now do except perhaps to put up larger signs warning of the presence of wild boar. **(Action HB)**

JK said he had talked to Somerset CC, who were not really able to help, noting that wild boar had been present in Somerset and Wiltshire for some years.

MG confirmed that there was nothing much the Parish Council can do. It has the power to report but no powers of enforcement. He also said that unless people have hard evidence that would stand up in Court they should not make accusations of anybody. Certainly the PC cannot make any such accusations.

CH asked that the village be made more aware of the potential arrival wild boar in the village and the damage they can cause. **(Action HB)**

MP suggested Mr Goldsmith be asked to finance fencing off our playing field in anticipation of wild boar from his land causing damage this winter. **(Action HB)**

MG asked if we were advised of license applications for wild animal releases in nearby Wiltshire. He thought it would be worthwhile asking Wilts CC for such information. They should understand the need to advise WF of all applications close to the village boundary. We could ask for a list of local licenses. JK stated that Mendip Council had confirmed to him no Licenses had been granted for keeping wild boar in Mendip District. **(Action JK)**

Beth Horstmann said she had a list of people in the village who had seen the wild boar.

Bus shelter.

JK said he had given the go ahead to Jim Rosser, but that he was waiting to contact Tom Hyde and Will Shepherd about its exact location. It should be completed by the end of September. **(Action WS)**

Finances.

The bank balance is healthy. JK was concerned that reclaiming VAT on certain purchases was still outstanding. **(Action VB)**

MP urged that a good reserve fund be maintained in case of the Witham Water situation becoming a problem.

Network Rail.

Nothing more on their Easter plans to report. **(Action HB & MP)**

Highways

MP pointed out that the verges on Private Road are now dangerously overgrown – action to improve visibility all around the village is urgently needed. FN to chase Somerset Highways. **(Action FN)**

MG pointed out that it was worth chasing Somerset Highways as the Holt Lane area had possibly been forgotten/missed.

Communications

CH is currently working with Val to service the website.

CH pointed out that WF groups were wasting their opportunity to provide info about their activities on the website. He asked that interested parties contact him. Whole pages could be devoted to their individual causes. **(Action CH)**

Playing Field

The perimeter track is now in good shape and in frequent use by walkers and children cycling. Grass Valet's invoice had been paid by the council.

The Play-patch

HB voiced concern that children were often seen in the play-patch unaccompanied. It was agreed to post a reminder of the Govt's instructions on the village Facebook page. **(Action HB)**

Annual Governance Statement.

The AGS has to be submitted by the end of August. **(Action The Clerk)**

Any other business – in lieu of *Other business referred to the Clerk*

MP asked if there was any progress on Witham Water. HB undertook to chase Bristol Water.

MG had been approached by Gillian Davis, who was someone unable to access the internet and therefore the minutes online. He asked if we could make better of the notice board, perhaps by putting in a step to make it more accessible. JK said he had arranged for the notice board to be made more accessible and would look at using a larger font for minutes and the monthly agenda.

Anne suggested the minutes be published in the pub. As internal access is currently not possible it was proposed to ask Lorna to put the minutes up somewhere outside. **(CH Action)**

Date of next meeting was confirmed as 7.30pm on 10th September 2020, probably on Zoom, but hopefully in the Village Hall. HB to advise.

Hugo Brooke.

