

Witham Friary Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Thursday 17th December 2020, 7.30pm

Present: Hugo Brooke (Chairman) (**HB**), Will Shepherd (**WS**), Colin Horstmann (**CH**), John Knowles (**JK**), Marcus Powell (**MP**), Fred Nicholls (**FN**), District Councillor Michael Gay (**MG**) & latterly Members of the Public

12/01 Apologies

None

12/02 Disclosures of Interest

None

12/03 Minutes of the last meeting

These were approved as an accurate record of the November 2020 meeting.

12/03.1 Matters referred to the Chair – The Parish Clerk advised that due to her husband's relocation she will no longer be able to continue in the role of Clerk. She said she would continue to support the PC until a suitable candidate is found and trained. The vacancy will be advertised shortly.

12/03.2 Xmas Tree – HB reported that unfortunately due to costs and logistics it had not been possible to erect a Christmas tree in the Play patch as had been requested. He suggested that the council look into having one next year, perhaps with the help of the Conker Committee.

Meeting was suspended for the Public to speak on any relevant issue.

No members of the public were available at this time.

Michael Gay (District Councillor) reminded the PC the closing date for the Landscape planning consultation at MDC was 31st December. MDC finance would be reviewing costs that could be borne by Parish Councils as part of the work to close the funding gap caused by the reduction in Central Government funding. The Clerk had stated she hadn't received the relevant documentation, which the District Councillor undertook to resolve.

After note: He did so the following day.

12/04 Covid-19

A link will put onto the Website so parishioners can access up-to-date information.

12/05 Planning

None

12/06 Schools Initiative

To be moved to February 2021 Agenda

12/07 Car Charging Point

JK waiting for an update on possible government funding opportunities and will discuss at next meeting.

12/08 Finance

12/08.1 The current financial statement was approved

12/08.2 **Website hosting charges:** PC agreed unanimously to reimburse the Chair for website hosting and monthly charges he had incurred.

12/08.3 **Precept 20/21** – To be added to January's Agenda as our bid has to be in by 15th January 2021. **MG** pointed out the Finance officer at MDC has confirmed that for next financial year he will be looking at charges that could be borne by towns and parishes rather than the District. Mendip's officer is also the lead officer considering finances for any unitary body that may succeed district councils, so his findings may have lasting effect. **MG's** view was that extra costs are likely to be coming the way of Parish Councils who wish to preserve or enhance services that are currently covered under the district rate and the council may wish to bear that in mind when setting next year's precept, to avoid having to make a big jump in the future.

12/09 Actions

HB to advertise the pending Parish Clerk vacancy.

12/10 Reports

12/10.1 **Highways.** **FN** Advised Charlie Higgins had said that Private Road will be resurfaced next year. He also advised that substantial work has been agreed with Claire Haskins on West End Hill, to repair the hole that rainwater had exposed. The Chair asked that in future any complaints about mud on roads in the Parish be addressed to **FN** (850367).

12/10.2 **Communications.** **CH** Advised that the old website had been shut down and all the information on it had been retrieved.

12/10.3 **Recreation Ground.** **WS** Reminded the parish that dogs are not allowed on the playing field or the perimeter path.

12/10.4 **The Playing field committee** would like to shape the mound in the corner of the field into a pump track. Mike Gorman from the Conker Committee is looking at funding. The Clerk proposed a vote of thanks be extended to Tom Hyde & Deborah Gibson for all of their hard work with the playing field committee.

12/10.5 **Litter picking.** A big thank you was voted to Guy Griffin for organising and carrying out the recent litter picking operation.

12/10.6 **Play-patch.** JK stated that the urgent repairs have now been completed. Further work would be carried out in the new year.

12/10.7 **Footpaths.** JK & HB had spoken with the landowner regarding the reinstatement of the Witham end of the Wanstrow footpath/bridleway. Nick Hutton had offered to pay 60% towards making the right of way passable. Agreement was needed from Somerset Highways and FWAG and discussions are on going.

12/11 Witham Water Update

HB Reported that Bristol Water have said they will be sending us a costed proposal for supplying the village with water, before Christmas.

12/12 Witham Working Group

HB undertook to talk with Roy Featherstone about formalising the Group.

11/14 Other Business referred to the Clerk

Complaint of litter left by Network Rail alongside the Tynemead track. MP said that they have been advised but have yet to respond.

11/15 The next WFPC meeting was confirmed as Thursday 14th January 2021

After Note

The Clerk wishes to remind everyone that only those items on the published agenda can be discussed at PCM's and asks that she be informed in good time of anything new anyone wishes to raise, so that the statutory notice can be given.