

WEST WYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11th July 2024

Present

Councillors; Mr S. Cope (Chair), Mr N. Harris (Vice Chair), Mr J. Carstensen, Mrs K. Cheshire, Mrs E Copley and Mrs V. Smith

In attendance: The Clerk, Mr S Marshall and Cllr D. Hayday.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Rowland, Cllr O Hayday and Mrs Wright.

Declaration of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of previous meetings for approval

The minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 13th June 2024, were approved and signed by the Chair.

318.27 Matters arising from the minutes

The Clerk had booked the Village Hall for future Parish Council Meetings which were to be held on the second Wednesday of the month. The Clerk had distributed a schedule of meeting dates for 2024/2025 prior to the start of the July meeting.

The Clerk had made contact with Mr Peter Towersey, the Chiltern Society Co-ordinator, who had confirmed that the path over the railway bridge had been cut.

The date of the next litter pick had been set as Saturday 5 October 2024 and the Village Hall had been booked on that date from 0930 until 1230.

Sparkx had confirmed that their quotation would cover the required period of Christmas lights installations from Friday 22 November 2024 until Monday 6 January 2025.

318.28 Highways issues

Cllr Smith confirmed that there had not been any significant traffic congestion because of the traffic control measures introduced on the High Street to allow for the external redecoration of some of the National Trust properties. The contractors involved in the installation of the traffic control measures and the erection of scaffolding had been efficient.

318.29 Planning applications & decisions

There were no planning applications or decisions to discuss.

318.30 'Utility Aid' contract renewal

Information had previously been sent to Councillors regarding the renewal of the contract for the period September 2024 to March 2028 with the cost per kilowatt hour reducing from 60.26 pence to 28.90 pence per kilowatt hour. The Chair confirmed that the NALC recommended the use of Utility Aid to ensure the best tariffs were achieved. Councillors agreed that the new contract presented good value when energy prices were still volatile. Cllr Smith proposed the acceptance of the contract which was seconded by Cllr Cheshire. The Clerk would request a new contract for the Chair to sign.

318.31 Reports;

a. Buckinghamshire Council Councillors

Cllr D. Hayday confirmed that the pavement clearance on Chorley Road was being vigorously pursued as far as a start date for the work, with the Chair reiterating the importance of the work being carried out as soon as possible because of the safety dangers to pedestrians having only a very restricted width of pavement that could be used.

Cllr Hayday was pleased to acknowledge that Cllr Harris had agreed to pass on to the management of the National Trust who were managing the external redecoration programme for properties in the High Street that it was causing business owners considerable concern because of the anticipated detrimental impact the parking and traffic control restrictions would have on the level of business. The Chair once again expressed the Parish Council's own concern regarding the effect on local businesses that the redecoration programme would have and hoped that the permission granted to use the burial ground car park would alleviate some of the parking space shortage during the period.

b. Chair of the Parish Council's verbatim report

"The work that Neil (Vice Chair) and I agreed to carry out at the Pedestal Playing Field has now been completed - we replaced the rope on the rope bridge, ensured all the bolt ends were covered with the necessary plastic plugs, and bolted down the nearby bench. Neil led the way on this, although I did play a vital role in passing him a nut and washer when he needed them!

I took delivery of the MVAS from Swarco last Wednesday, and Neil and I restored it to its position on Friday afternoon. I am sad, angry, frustrated, annoyed and upset to have to report that over the weekend the unit had been opened and the batteries stolen. Another of our VASs, the one on Chorley Road opposite to the entrance to the allotments, was also reported on Sunday as having been damaged and had its battery stolen. The Clerk has reported these thefts to the police and our insurers. I am at a loss as to how we might properly protect these devices against damage and theft.

I am pleased to report that Alf Dobosz from Acorn Landscaping is amenable to our suggestion that he takes on the regular inspection of the play equipment at the Pedestal Playing Field. He will undertake the BMKALC course at the end of the month, which we will fund and after this we will be paying him a monthly retainer. He will be visiting and inspecting the equipment once a week during the spring and summer, and once a fortnight during the autumn and winter months when the play equipment is used less.

I see in the latest newsletter from the Chilterns Conservation Board that Natural England anticipates that the statutory and public consultation on an extension to the Chilterns AONB boundary will take place in Autumn/Winter 2024, so we look forward to hearing more about this in due course.

I have been invited by BMKALC to attend a short presentation by Matt Barber, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley at The Gateway, Aylesbury on September 25th from 6.30pm to 8pm, however I am not able to do so - if anyone else is able to I can forward the invitation.”

After the Chair’s report, Cllr Copley expressed an interest in attending the presentation by Matt Barber, PPC for the Thames Valley and the Chair would forward Cllr Copley the details.

c. Councillors of the Parish Council

Cllr Carstensen agreed to forward to Councillors and the Clerk an outline of the agenda and format for the upcoming event being organised by Buckinghamshire Waste Busters Community Organisation on Saturday 28 September 2024 in the West Wycombe Village Hall.

Cllr Smith had raised with the Clerk the outstanding repair works relating to the burial ground/orchard kissing gate and the shelter belt wire. The Clerk had enquired with Mr Spratt regarding this work which had been requested in April 2024 together with additional work issued in June which related to gate repairs on the Pedestal Playing Field and the kissing gate into the sheep field on the A40, close to the village. Cllr Smith further raised the possibility of allowing permanent car parking spaces for residents in the burial ground car back. Such an idea was not thought to be a policy that could be adopted.

Cllr Cheshire reported on the plans being organised for VE Day on Thursday 8 May 2025 to mark the 80th anniversary.

d. Clerk to the Parish Council

The Clerk reported that the repairs to the Pedestal Playing Field car park had been completed together with the replacement of a wooden post designed to prevent vehicular access onto the playing field. The work requested of Mr Spratt in April and June was still outstanding and discussions were ongoing.

The Chair and the Clerk had dealt with a resident in Copperfields who has an ongoing issue with a neighbour’s tree which the resident insists prohibits the use of the pavement and forces him into the road. The matter is a civil matter, but the Parish Council is content that the tree poses no risk to pedestrians.

The Clerk confirmed that there would be a wedding at St Paul's church on Saturday 7 September 2024 and permission had been granted for guests to use the burial ground car park.

As mentioned in 'matters arising', the Chair had requested a quote for cutting back overhanging trees onto the pavement on West Wycombe Road. Complete Tree Services had provided a quote for £595 net to undertake the work. It was recognised that the land and the overhanging trees were not the responsibility of the Parish Council, but the overhanging trees posed an immediate issue as far as the use of the pavement by pedestrians and it was therefore decided that the work should be undertaken. Cllr Harris proposed that the work should be undertaken which was seconded by Cllr Copley.

The Chair had asked the Clerk to deal with the matter of the overgrown church yard at St Laurence's church. There is a ring-fenced element of the Council Tax allocated to the specific cost of maintaining the church yard. The Clerk had been informed that the grass would be cut the following week and the Clerk had asked the contracts manager, Simon Coultas, for details of the frequency and specification of the maintenance contract, together with the monitoring process that Buckingham Council has in place with the contractor. The Clerk expressed his appreciation for Cllr D Hayday's assistance with attempting to resolve the condition of St Laurence's church yard.

The Treasurer of Downley Dynamos, Mr Ben Stupples, had contacted the Clerk regarding the proposed increase in their annual rent for the Pedestal Playing Field which had been agreed at £60 at June's Parish Council meeting, as the club's finances were tight, and the Treasurer had asked for the Parish Council to reconsider such an increase. During the ensuing discussion, Councillors were empathetic as to the concern expressed by Downley Dynamos but also conscious of its own increase in operational costs. It was further regarded as a fair and reasonable increase in the rental as there had not been an increase in the rent for several years. The Clerk was requested to inform Downley Dynamos' Treasurer that the Council's decision to increase the rent by £60 per year would remain in place.

The Clerk reported that a VAT refund claim has been submitted to HMRC for the 1st quarter of the year amounting to £346.

The Clerk reported that a leading UK charity; Electrical Safety First.org was lobbying the new government for tighter lithium – ion battery regulations for e-bikes and e-scooters following the surge in fires caused by these batteries across the UK. The charity was requesting support via the SLCC and the NALC from Parish Councils. Councillors were in favour of the Parish Council supporting such an initiative.

The Clerk would be attending the Clerks Forum in High Wycombe next week and the main topic would be 'Rights of Way' and the meeting would provide an opportunity to meet Christopher Anousis the interim Highways Community Liaison Manager covering Rosie Tunnard's maternity leave.

318.32 Recess

10 mph and 'Children at play' signs had been installed when phase 2 of Copperfields was constructed by Banner Homes and a resident enquired as to their relevance so many years later. It was felt that the signs should be left in situ as it would be difficult to seek agreement from the local authorities for their removal.

It was believed that High Street business owners were considering paying for customers' parking fees whilst the parking restrictions were in place during the redecoration of National Trust properties on the High Street.

318.33 Financial Statement

Financial Statement as of 30th June 202

Opening balance 1 st April 2024	£27,726.23
Income as of 28 th June 2024	£26,039.87
Less;	
Expenditure April – June 2024	£15,381.53
= Closing balance as of 28 th June 2024	<u>£38,384.57</u>

The June bank statement was signed by the Chair and Vice Chair which reconciled the Financial Statement.

318.34 Accounts for approval and payment

Cheques:

Sparkx – photocell repair to column outside 10 Chorley Road = £295.80

TBS Hygiene Ltd – Dog waste collections - £123.84

Acorn Landscaping – Maintenance of burial ground, playing field & highways verges - £1056.37

R J Stallwood & Co. – Repairs to playing field car park - £1164.00

Direct Debit/Card payments:

SSE Energy Solutions – Electricity consumption - £237.67

Castle Water – Allotment and burial ground - £10.56

Smart Numbers – Mobile telephone service charge - £23.99

318.35 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as **Wednesday 11th September 2024** in the Village Hall in West Wycombe.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.02pm.

* Denotes an action point