

WEST WYCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11th September 2024

Present

Councillors; Mr N. Harris (Vice Chair & Acting Chair), Mrs K. Cheshire, Mrs E Copley and Mrs V. Smith

In attendance: The Clerk, Mr S Marshall, Cllr D. Hayday, Cllr Barnes and Mrs A. Wright.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Cllr Cope, Cllr Rowland, Cllr Carstensen and Cllr O. Hayday.

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 11th July 2024, were approved and signed by the Acting Chair.

318.36 Matters arising from the minutes

Cllr Smith queried with the Clerk that the correct annual fee had been used for Downley Dynamos when agreeing to the increase for 2024/2025. *

318.37 Highways issues

The idea of installing permanent traffic control lights in the High Street was discussed, following the success of their temporary use whilst National Trust carried out redecorations and restorations to certain properties during the summer. It was agreed to add an item to the agenda for the October 2024 meeting to discuss the matter further.

318.38 Planning applications & decisions

Concern was expressed regarding the installation of a glass sided 'skylight' on Wyeside in Park Farm Road, which appeared not to be included in the plans used in the planning application. The Clerk would investigate the matter further with the Planning department. *

The Clerk informed the meeting that the planning application for 361B and 361C West Wycombe Road had been withdrawn. There had been no objections relating to planning applications relating to a new timber shed within the curtilage at St Paul's Church and felling of trees at 60, Chapel Lane, West Wycombe.

318.39 Financial Reserves Policy

The Clerk explained that the proposed policy formalises the Council's position as far as how it intends to use the General Reserve it has accumulated over a number of years for the purposes of transparency in managing public funds. The policy would also form part of the Council's Financial Regulations. The Parish Council also needed to compile a Financial Risk Assessment which is reviewed by Councillors on an annual basis in accordance with legislation. The Clerk would carry out this exercise and present it to Councillors as soon as possible in order to comply with the regulations.

The adoption of the policy was proposed by Cllr Smith and seconded by Cllr Harris.

318.40 Permanent memorial to the late Mr Roger Seymour

West Wycombe Community Association had kindly agreed to a proposal by Mr Simon Cope to name a room in the West Wycombe Village Hall as 'The Roger Seymour Room'. Following discussion, Councillors thought the proposal was a good idea and agreed to fund the cost of the door sign for the room as well as a plaque to explain who Mr Roger Seymour was and the significant contribution he had made to village life.

The matter was proposed to be adopted by Cllr Harris and seconded by Cllr Copley.

318.41 Reports;

a. Buckinghamshire Council Councillors

Cllr Hayday asked for the location of hanging branches on Chorley Road which needed attention and were thought to be the responsibility of the West Wycombe Estate. Cllr Hayday was disappointed with the decision not to create a Town Council for High Wycombe and questioned the 'skewed' nature of the questioning in the Local Governance consultation. Cllr Hayday reported on the installation of the 50 mph signs at the end of the village towards Piddington which had taken over a year to be installed and reported on the spate of battery thefts from MVAS equipment in the area. Cllr Hayday was pleased that the National Trust had completed their work on properties in the High Street and thought the contractors had done a good job on the project.

b. Chair of the Parish Council's verbatim report

"I am pleased to report that over the summer work has been carried out to cut back the growth overhanging the area of West Wycombe Road on the north side, from near to the railway bridge along to the van hire site; and the area of Chorley Road near the allotments that we discussed at our last meeting. Regarding the latter, I reported via FixMyStreet the parlous state of the pavement surface following the carrying out of this work but was informed that "minor defects such as the defect you have reported may not be immediately scheduled for repair."

Whilst working from home on Friday 23 August I noticed that some tree surgeons had arrived on Rosemary Close and had started work on the three big conifers. This is work that the Parish Council had been informed would be taking place, but we were awaiting further details and a start date - so it was a surprise to see the team arrive! Following concerns from residents the Parish Council asked Buckinghamshire Council, who own the land and are responsible for the trees, to come and inspect them - they decided that the trees needed to be removed, since they were becoming hazardous, and it was not viable simply to cut them back. Bucks Council have said that they will look to replant more suitable trees at some point, to replace those being removed. The team were only able to begin the work and have not returned since - they have passed my phone number to their head office in the hope that they will be able to give me some notice of when they intend to return.

In order to ensure that we are kept abreast of any matters of interest or concern that may arise in West Wycombe village, I would like to propose the creation of a new, voluntary role, which I suggest we call Village Warden. The holder of this position will act as the Parish Council's 'eyes & ears' in the village and will be a useful channel of communication between residents and the PC. I propose that this be initially a temporary role, for the period until our current term of office ends next May. I would further like to propose that we appoint Mrs Angie Wright to the position with immediate effect.

Councillors will have seen the draft Key Decision Report that we have been sent by Buckinghamshire Council following the public consultation on the proposals to mitigate the danger to pedestrians caused by footway incursions on West Wycombe High Street. I would like us to at least begin the process of formulating a response to the report this evening and would welcome your contributions to this discussion. I think it is important to bear in mind that this project was initiated following concerns over pedestrian safety, and that this remains the overriding reason for it. I note that one High Street resident responded to say that the proposals would have no effect on traffic mounting the pavement near the Village Hall; as I recall this was considered by the team from Transport for Buckinghamshire who came and carried out the initial survey, but this area was not identified as being hazardous to pedestrians. It would be helpful to have sight of the responses from Buckinghamshire Council's Freight Strategy Team and Parking Services Team to the comments made by residents and business owners. I am very mindful of the concerns of business owners, and one suggestion in this respect would be that we push for the road markings indicating the 45-minute waiting bays to be reapplied to make them significantly clearer. I also note the comments from the Planning Service about the sensitive nature of the area and the heritage implications of the proposed works; it is my view that these need to be balanced with a recognition that the High Street is a residential and business area, and the importance of ensuring the safety of pedestrians.

I would like to draw your attention to the consultation on the draft Buckinghamshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and to urge you to respond if you feel able to. The consultation is open until Sunday 13th October.

Finally, an advance notice that I will be attending the next meeting of the Rural Forum on Thursday October 24th, 5-7pm - this is a virtual meeting, so if anyone else would like to join please let me know and I will send through the details."

Also, regarding agenda item 7, a memorial to Roger, as Vicki and Emma will be aware I put forward a proposal to Monday evening's meeting of West Wycombe Community Association that the upstairs room at the Hall be named The Roger Seymour Room. This proposal was accepted, following which I suggested that, subject to confirmation that this is something we are allowed to spend our funds on, the Parish Council might want to consider paying for a sign for the room and some sort of plaque explaining who Roger was and the contribution he made to village life. I would be grateful if this could be raised this evening."

After the reading of the Chair's report by the Acting Chair, the Chair's proposal to appoint Mrs Angie Wright into the post as described in the Chair's report was proposed by Cllr Harris and seconded by Cllr Smith after it had been decided to name the role as the 'West Wycombe Parish Correspondent'.

c. Councillors of the Parish Council

Cllr Harris reported on the delay to organise the cutting and baling of the grass in the community orchard. Cllr Harris further reported on the unsatisfactory repair to a missing granite kerbstone on the High Street which had been repaired with concrete and cement. Cllr D. Hayday explained that this had been a temporary repair as it was a safety issue that required immediate attention with the materials available.

Cllr Cheshire confirmed that the organisation for the 'Festive Fayre' in December was well in hand.

Cllr Copley suggested that some senior citizens would benefit from the advice and support provided by 'Age UK' including advice about the 'Winter Fuel Payment'. It was suggested that the contact details of Age UK could be included in the next 'Contact' article. *

Cllr Smith suggested that the Parish Council send Councillors' 'best wishes' to Cllr Carstensen and Cllr Rowland. * Cllr Smith had attempted to sort out the discrepancies with the cycle of refuse collections in the village and Cllr D. Hayday asked Cllr Smith to write to him about the issues.

d. Clerk to the Parish Council

The Clerk reported that the repair work completed since the last meeting included the repairs to the kissing gate at the burial ground/orchard and the kissing gate into the sheep field from the A40 – the repairs to the gates leading onto the playing field from Cookshall Lane had also been repaired.

The Clerk had arranged a pre-priced agreement with Play Inspections for 2025 to include the adult gym equipment for the sum of £175 net – compared to a cost of £135 net for 2024.

There had been damage to the headstone of Mr Don Chester's grave in the burial ground and further to investigations by the Chair and the Clerk, they were satisfied that the damage had not been caused by the grounds contractor's equipment but presumably by wanton vandalism. The matter had been reported as a crime to the police authority and Mrs Susie Chester informed as to the outcome of the investigation.

The Clerk reported that the residents of the Dower House had raised the issue of potholes at the entrance to the driveway to St Paul's church which is jointly the responsibility of the Parish Council (PC), the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and the residents of the Dower House. The PCC have been asked to comment on the condition of the driveway and the Chair of the PC has been asked to take a view on the condition of the driveway. *

The Clerk reminded Councillors that elections for the posts of Parish Councillor would be taking place in May 2025 and Councillors are asked to inform the Chair if their intention is NOT to stand for re-election.

318.42 Financial Statement

Financial Statement as of 31st August 2024

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Opening balance 1 st April 2024 | £27,726.23 |
| Income as of 31 st August 2024 | £26,039.87 |
| Less; | |
| Expenditure April – August 2024 | £19,264.37 |
| = Closing balance as of 31 st August | <u>£34,501.73</u> |

The August bank statement was signed by the Acting Chair which reconciled the Financial Statement.

318.43 Accounts for approval and payment

Mr S Marshall – Clerk's salary July-September 2024 & expenses - £2851.80

TBS Hygiene Ltd – Dog waste collections - £123.84 & £154.80

Acorn Landscaping – Maintenance of burial ground, playing field & highways verges – Playground inspection -
Repairs to burial ground kissing gate & fencing – totalling £1185.15

Bramley Business Services Ltd – Tax & NIC payments July – September 2024 - £602.20

West Wycombe Estate – Playing field rent 2020 – 2024 - £2000.00

PKF Littlejohn LLP – External auditor fee - £378.00

Complete Tree Services – West Wycombe Road clearance - £714.00

Mr G Spratt – Repairs to kissing gate (A40) and pedestrian gate onto playing field - £250.00

Direct Debit payments made in August 2024:

SSE Energy Solutions – Electricity consumption - £237.67

Castle Water – Water consumption - £10.56 – *Invoice query for £5 outstanding*

Smart numbers – Mobile telephone service charges - £23.99

318.44 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as **Wednesday 9th October 2024** in the Village Hall in West Wycombe.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.57pm.

* Denotes an action point