

RADFORD SEMELE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

A meeting of the Parish Council was held on Monday 29th November 2021 at 7.30 pm in the Community Hall, Lewis Road, Radford Semele.

Participants: Cllr S Sabin (in the chair), Cllr D Carter, Cllr B Follett, Cllr B Friar, Cllr A T Hitchcox, Cllr Mrs J P Malin, Cllr R Munn, Cllr Musa and Cllr J Sudbury

In attendance: WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt and WCC Cllr W A Redford

1. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Council meeting on 25th October 2021

The Minutes of the meeting on 25th October 2021 were approved; proposed by Cllr Follett and seconded by Cllr Sudbury.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Council meeting on 25th October 2021

The Clerk outlined matters not dealt with under other headings:

1. He had received a positive response from the householder at 57 Hatherell Road with regard to removing the rubbish off the Playing Field.
2. Cllr Hitchcox had not managed to arrange an event with the Graham Fulford Prostate Cancer Trust due to some logistical problems. It was AGREED to leave the matter in abeyance for the time being.
3. The Clerk said he had repeatedly sent emails to the Highways Dept to have the tarmac outside the Shop repaired following the accident some months ago but had received no positive response. WCC Cllr Redford asked for copies of the communications and said he would take it up with the appropriate department of WCC.
Action: WCC Cllr Redford
4. The Chairman outlined that the Clerk and himself had been trying to get some positive response from Severn Trent Water on the leak at the junction of the A425 and School Lane. WCC Cllr Redford had also been involved in correspondence with Highways Dept who took the view that the problem was one for Severn Trent Water. The Clerk confirmed that he had a note from Mr Machin at the Highways Dept identifying a job number on the Severn Trent Water file, indicating that they proposed to do something about it. Cllr Hitchcox said that he had seen a vehicle from Traffix with temporary street furniture arrive at the site for an appointment with Severn Trent Water who failed to attend. WCC Cllr Redford asked for copies of the paperwork and said he would take the matter up with Highways/Severn Trent Water.
Action: WCC Cllr Redford
5. The Chairman had circulated a memo concerning the hedges along the footpath adjacent to the School; he had suggested asking WCC to uplift an identifiable sum of about £5,000 from Section 106 monies to this Council so that contractors could be hired by us to carry out the work. The Clerk said he had repeatedly asked for a response from the Footpaths Dept of WCC as the Highways Dept, to whom he had turned, had said it was a matter for the Footpaths Dept. He had received a note with a job number from the Footpaths Dept but no action. WCC Cllr Redford asked for copies of the paperwork and said he would take up the matter with one or both of these departments at WCC.
Action: WCC Cllr Redford

4. Review of Speedwatch

1. Cllr Munn spoke briefly to update. The laser device has now been repaired; it was dealt with rapidly by the suppliers. He has found that the team has now developed a skill for taking accurate numbers

of cars. He now has on paper nine volunteers but only three of them are qualified to use the laser device. He is negotiating for more training with the Police.

2. The Clerk said that at the previous meeting the question of insurance for the volunteers had been raised by Cllr Friar. He had been in touch with the Council's insurance brokers recently and had obtained written confirmation that volunteers are covered under the Public Liability Insurance so long as they are acting under the direction of this Council. He advised that caution must be applied to the Speedwatch operation so it is clear that volunteer work is under the direction of the Council. The best practice would be for Cllr Munn or some other Cllr to be in charge of any given team.
3. Cllr Munn said he would take up the suggestion by Cllr Mrs Malin in that a full record of activity should be kept so that the success of the scheme could be monitored for different purposes.
4. He pointed out that the vehicle activated speed sign adjacent to Kingshurst is defective and he was advised by the Chairman and the Clerk that the person at WCC to apply to for this is Mr Graham Stanley, senior engineer and responsible for road signage (the Chairman and the Clerk had had previous dealings with Mr Stanley).

5. **Traffic management issues**

The Chairman outlined that he is negotiating a meeting with senior people at WCC probably in the New Year; he had written to Charles Barlow who together with Rob Powell are senior officers in WCC. It will be proposed that the Chairman, the Clerk, the Vice Chairman and WCC Cllr Redford would form a working group to meet with the WCC officials. The objective will be to present the report from Tom Head and engender a discussion on it. Cllr Carter expressed an interest in joining the group and so did Cllr Munn; the make up of the party to be further considered by the Chairman and the Clerk. **Action: Chairman & Clerk**

6. **Section 106 and CIL payments**

The Clerk had had a recent communication with Helen Hancox of WDC confirming that she is working on a response to the draft funding letter presented by him to her some months ago; she had apologised for the delay.

The Clerk said he had no further update or communication from the Canal and River Trust.

A similar position relates to the proposed cycle way – a capital allocation will need to be made by WCC.

WCC Cllr Redford said that there is an issue over the safety of the old railway viaduct across the canal at Radford Lock; until this is resolved there will be a delay factor on the proposed canal conservation project.

7. **Warwickshire County Council – update report**

WCC Cllr Redford said currently there are no deaths from Covid, but the infection rate is going up. This rate is not applicable to the whole of the WDC area, but it particularly relates to Leamington and Whitnash who are carrying the highest figures.

The infection rates in the over 60s are down (good news) but hospitals are full to capacity in excess of 90% and this is a result of elective surgery coming in from the backlog created by the pandemic. However, there is no indication that Covid infection is getting into hospitals.

He put out a memorandum for reporting to PC King with policing priorities for the purpose of voting at the next Eastern Neighbourhood Forum; the Chairman confirmed that a policing priority had been forwarded in the name of the Council.

He said he is no longer responsible for adult social care, but he is aware that there is a strong adverse view on the slow speed of turn around by the Ambulance Service. The view of the WCC politicians is that their performance is poor and a working group including local GPs has been set up to monitor their performance. Cllr Hitchcox asked whether his request some months ago for repairs to School Lane was still in the forefront of WCC Highways repair programmes; Cllr Redford said it would be considered at the forthcoming budget meeting.

8. Warwick District Council – update report

WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt reported:

1. WDC is going through a serious budget review taking into account the heavy burden of costs incurred by them for Covid.
2. The consultation period for disposal of Riverside House has been concluded but this needs to be considered by WDC and debated.
3. In December, WDC will take a vote on whether to forge ahead with the link with Stratford District Council.
4. Reorganisation of the Upper Parade is under consideration to avoid the congestion around the bus stop at the upper end. In passing, this should reduce pollution.
5. The Abbey Fields swimming complex is closed at present.
6. 25 Afghan refugees are lodged in the WDC area; an equal number are lodged with Stratford DC.
7. The Spa Centre is now operating on a full-time basis.
8. There are still problems with waste collection due to shortage of HGV drivers; there will be no green bin collection in the Christmas holiday period. The recycling centre is still working on a booking system.
9. WDC continue to work on how to reduce carbon pollution.
10. There is a significant problem with the Planning Enforcement Dept due to a serious shortage of staff. Recently a new manager was recruited to replace the one who resigned earlier in the year; at the last moment the new recruit withdrew.

9. Financial Matters

1. The Clerk reported that the bank balance on the investment account is £74,300 approximately and the balance on the operating account is £51,595 approximately.
2. A number of payments were authorised per the schedule which had been previously circulated, in particular payment of £ 86.34 expenses to Cllr Friar in respect of the subscription to Zoom, expenses of £7.50 to Cllr Hitchcox in respect of outlay on goalposts, and £35,998 paid to Proludic Ltd for installation of the adult gym equipment, this sum being funded by Groundwork UK on behalf of HS2 (apart from the VAT element). The payments were approved, proposed by Cllr Mrs Malin and seconded by Cllr Musa.
3. The Clerk had arranged an appointment with Barclays Bank in Leamington on 17th December for himself, the Chairman and the Vice Chairman to attend an interview with the business manager there to discuss the opening of a new bank account for this Council.
4. Cllr Friar had previously circulated a draft budget for the current year and draft proposals for the Precept for 2022/2023. He outlined the details on the budget. It was AGREED that there would be a special meeting of the Council in the early part of January 2022 to follow up the budget and approve the draft Precept to be presented by Cllr Friar and the Clerk to WDC; it was anticipated that the filing date with WDC would be in January (since the meeting notice has been received from WDC that the filing end date is 14th January 2022). The Chairman emphasised that by law the whole Council should approve the Precept and the best practice was that the whole Council should approve the budget which it supported.

10. Correspondence

The Clerk outlined different correspondence that had occurred:

- a. He had received an email from an occupier of property in Godfrey Close adjacent to the plot of land which has just been planted with a tree in commemoration of the late Cllr Tony Malin. It was noted that

there was no need for the Clerk to respond to this email as Cllr Follett had already spoken to the householder and clarified the position between the householder and this Council.

- b. The Clerk had received a circular email from WCC relating to a Warwickshire Social Impact Fund which is open to applications for grants from community organisations; although recently reviewed by the Chairman and the Chair of the Finance Committee, it was confirmed that no further action was required in respect of this.
- c. The Clerk had received a nice letter of thanks from the Treasurer to St Nicholas' Church in respect of the churchyard grant of £700.

11. Planning Matters

1. W/15/1635 - 56 Southam Road
This matter is ongoing; WDC Enforcement Dept are taking action through the court, but the process is a slow one. It was hoped that WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt would bring some influence to bear.
2. Canalside Development Plan Document Consultation (Ongoing)
The Clerk confirmed that no further information had been received in respect of this; he pointed out that the Head of Development Services upon whom our notice had been served has now left WDC.
3. W/20/0432
The planning application in respect of 3 Hallfields (objected to by this Council) is still pending.
4. W/21/0862
The planning application in respect of St Andrews House – the position is as above.
5. W/21/1412 & 1422LB
It was noted that the application for alteration to the building at The White Lion has now been granted so it is hoped that the proprietors will be opening up for business soon.
6. W/21/1425
It is understood that the planning application in respect of Fosse Wharf Farm has now been granted.
7. W21/1513
The application in respect of 11 Williams Road has now been granted.
8. W21/1523
So far as it is known, there is no pending application for 17 School Lane (the previous notice has been withdrawn).
9. W21/1804
The application in respect of 5 Hemmings Close is still pending.
10. W21/1937
The application for 8 Williams Road was found by this Council's Planning Committee to be unobjectionable.

An extra item concerning the exit from the Bovis site on to Offchurch Lane was discussed. The Clerk had written an email to the Planning Dept pointing out that a fencing structure at the exit site did not appear to be in accordance with the original planning consent. The Chairman had submitted photographs to the Dept as well. The response from Planning Dept is that the current structure conforms to current planning approval. It appears from research by the Chairman that on 14th December 2020 the original condition 16 in the planning approval was discharged on application by WCC. It appears that their submission was that an emergency vehicle exit was not necessary at this point but there was no consultation with this Council. The Clerk observed that the decision appeared to have been made by officers during the period of lockdown and had not been properly considered. It was AGREED that WCC Cllr Redford would look further into this matter as the Clerk in his email had flagged up the risk / hazard factor that an emergency vehicle could not use this location to gain access to the housing estate. **Action: WCC Cllr Redford**

12. Update on the Playing Field

Cllr Follett reported:

1. The skateboard refurbishment had now been completed and the invoice from Wrights had been received; he had explained the total sum on that invoice under item 9 above. A slight amendment to the figures had been made by agreement between him and the contractors so that the invoice was slightly higher than the original quotation, but the difference is marginal.
2. Now that the equipment provision has been completed in different areas, he considers it is time to have an outside monitor's report; whether this should be RoSPA or Wicksteed is for further consideration. The Clerk observed that his dealings with Wicksteed over the years (mainly at the Clerks Annual Conference) encouraged him to agree with Cllr Follett that they were a better choice than RoSPA. The matter to be reviewed at the next meeting.
3. Cllr Follett had tabled a paper as to prospective tree planting with a likely cost of £ 250 plus VAT. He had not yet identified individual trees but presented the paper for future consideration. Cllr Friar pointed out that a request to apply funds for these trees was not included in the current budget.

He reminded Council that the Budget is a public document, deviation from that budget is acceptable provided it is agreed by full Council and recognised that the deviation would involve funds being re-allocated from other projects previously agreed in Council.

The Clerk observed that as regards the proposal as an item for future expenditure there was provision in the draft Budget for the forthcoming year for refurbishment of the Playing Field; in the scheme of things the quoted sum was marginal and perhaps can be accommodated within the provision in the Budget.

The Chairman put out for general approval the proposal by Cllr Follett; it was agreed in principle, proposed by Cllr Hitchcox and seconded by Cllr Musa - Cllr Follett to report further.

13. School Matters

1. Cllr Hitchcox said there was a serious issue about car parking around the School; which he had raised before. The Clerk said this was an issue which had already been considered by Tom Head and was referred to in his report. It was AGREED that any interim action was a matter for the School Governors – Cllr Sudbury to arrange this with them when he next met them.
Action: Cllr Sudbury
2. Cllr Sudbury said that it had been suggested to him that he become a School Governor and a member of the Sunbeams management Committee; the Clerk saw no objection to this provided he was careful as to any conflict of interest; it would be unwise for him to become Chairman of either body because a conflict of interest might arise. Cllr Sudbury said he would consider the matter further.
3. Cllr Sudbury reported on the outcome of the letter sent by Sunbeams to the Education portfolio holder at WCC, Mr Morgan, in terms of a letter drafted by the Clerk. It contained a request that current monies held under Section 106 in respect of the Bovis development (approximately £69,000) be released to the School/Sunbeams for expenditure on the Sunbeams building. A written response from the portfolio holder was couched in obscure terms. The Clerk and WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt had examined it from a legal point of view; their preliminary conclusion is that it is not a simple matter for WCC to transfer the stated sum.

The very poor condition of the Sunbeams building militates against spending a substantial sum on repairs and the stated sum is not sufficient to purchase a new building. WCC have to consider whether additional capital resources should be applied to the project of acquiring a new building. Cllr Sudbury said he had discussed this aspect with the Clerk prior to this meeting and would proceed to make further enquiries for the purposes of further review.

4. Mention was made of a substantial oak tree overshadowing the premises of the School, as this is on School grounds this is a matter for the Headteacher to resolve.

14. Pond security

Cllr Sudbury said he was in the process of submitting costings to the Council in respect of the safety fittings (life belt etc) for the pond but thought that the view had been taken that work on the fencing should be left until better weather. The Clerk reiterated his concern, that he had expressed on a number of occasions in the past, that the priority project was to install a fence at the side of the pond which currently has no fencing and to strengthen the existing fencing. To what extent this is necessary needs examination by someone specialising in fencing (the obvious consultant might be Mr Henry Marriott). Cllr Sudbury will pursue these processes.

Action: Cllr Sudbury

15. Footpath W123

The Clerk reported that he had applied to the Lands Registry for copy documents relating to Footpath W123 and any possible rights over adjoining land that the occupier of 9 Lythall Close might have. The application for an earlier Title Deed relating to this occupier's title had been accepted by the Land Registry and he anticipated receiving a copy shortly. His other application for a wide-ranging search of the environment of the footpath had temporarily stalled due to a query raised by the Registry on the plan which he had submitted. He will therefore resubmit the application with a fresh plan.

Action: Clerk

16. Complaints Policy

The Clerk said this item was on the agenda because some time ago Cllr Friar had expressed a concern that this Council's complaints policy should be updated. In the interim, the Clerk had confirmed with the Monitoring Officer at WDC (as noted in previous Minutes of this Council); the Monitoring Officer had advised that a complaint against an individual councillor came within the remit of the WDC Code of Conduct for adjudication by the Standards Committee there. A complaint against the Clerk or against the administrative process of the Council in general was not covered by that system and must therefore be reviewed by this Council. He had declined to supply the Clerk with any guidance as to wording or templates to review and he referred the Clerk to WALC. Recently the Clerk had received some template assistance from WALC, and he is currently reviewing the material.

17. Any other business

1. Reports by Cllr Mrs Malin had been circulated by the Clerk relating to the Community Hall and the Sports & Social Club; both of these had been seen by Cllrs prior to the meeting and were noted.
2. Cllr Musa had not been able to make any progress on consideration of the telephone box; the Chairman had passed to Cllr Sudbury at a previous meeting a file of papers relating to a referral by this Council to the Media Committee about a year ago in order to consider the telephone box. It was AGREED that Cllr Musa would look into this in conjunction with Cllr Sudbury. A report for the next meeting in January will be appreciated.
Action: Cllr Musa
3. The Clerk said that through Cllr Hitchcox he had noted that vandalism had been suffered to the goalposts (hence the invoice already approved at this meeting). The question arose as to whether this criminal activity should be reported to the Police – he suggested that this be reported to PC Ed King, and it was AGREED that he would do this.
Action: Clerk
4. It was AGREED that action on the vacancy for a new councillor this was more appropriate in the New Year; in the interim the Chairman and the Clerk would draft the wording of a suitable advert to be published in order to recruit. Meanwhile the legal notice of the vacancy will remain on the noticeboard and the website.
Action: Chairman & Clerk

18. Date of next meeting

The next main Council meeting will be on 31st January 2022. This meeting closed at 9.45pm and the Chairman wished all present a pleasant and peaceful Christmas.

Signed.....

Date..... 2021

Chairman of the Parish Council

Counter signed.....

Date.....2021

Clerk to the Parish Council