

RADFORD SEMELE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

A virtual meeting of the Parish Council was held on Monday 22nd February 2021 at 7.30 pm.

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 A Malin, Cllr R Munn and Cllr J Sudbury

In attendance: WCC Cllr Redford, WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt, Barbara Wyatt (FoRGE), Gary Stocker and WDC Chairman Cllr Martin Ashford

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed WDC Chairman Martin Ashford, Barbara Wyatt representing FoRGE and a member of the public, Gary Stocker.

2. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllr Musa; there were no declarations of interest.

WDC Cllr Ashford addressed the meeting at the invitation of the Chairman, summarised as follows:-

- a) All departments at WDC and WCC have been operating Working From Home procedures to shield members. To support medical attention, WDC had supported the issue of over 2,000 prescriptions.
- b) Free parking had been available to August 2020 and then reintroduced in the run up to Christmas 2020.
- c) £6.7M had been paid as grants to local businesses to support them during the pandemic.
- d) A concerted effort to resolve the homeless issues had resulted in the opening of a hostel for the homeless in which most of the local homeless had been content to go (although one or two have rejected that). The hostel is funded by WDC.
- e) The District is very happy to welcome the setting up of a large new diagnostics' laboratory.
- f) WDC has regular communications with the public in the form of press releases, signed off by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. These have provided a weekly update on the current position.
- g) WDC has played a significant part in the roll out of the new vaccines, providing support services and administration.
- h) There have been discussions with Stratford District Council at a tentative level to review and create joint working management projects.
- i) He expressed his thanks to this Council for the invitation to address this meeting.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Council meeting on 25th January 2021

The Minutes of the virtual Council meeting held on the 25th January 2021 were approved, proposed by Cllr Friar and seconded by Cllr Munn.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Council meeting on 25th January 2021

The Chairman invited the Clerk to run down the list that he had supplied to the Chairman as follows:-

- a) The Clerk has chased up the enquiry regarding land adjacent to Hallfields and was awaiting a response from WCC.

- b) He had received a written confirmation from Greene King that if they propose to turn off the power at The White Lion public house, this Council will be notified so they can take action regarding the defibrillator there.
- c) The Clerk had arranged for the mole catcher to make a return visit following Cllr Sudbury's request; the Clerk had not received a report from the mole catcher, but Cllr Sudbury confirmed that the mole infestation appears to have subsided.
- d) Following discussions at previous meetings about obtaining an expert's report on traffic management issues, the Clerk had been asked to try and locate a suitable expert; through one of his networks, the Clerk had made contact with a retired civil engineer who lives in the area and is prepared to produce a report after a suitable briefing. It was AGREED that the Chairman and the Clerk would put together the briefing. Action: Chairman & Clerk
- e) It was noted that, at the recent voting session of the Warwick Rural East, Safer Neighbourhood Team, Radford had been included in the Policing Priorities for Feb 21 – Jun 21, in the form of foot patrols to prevent and detect ASB/drug related activity.
- f) The Open Space funding letter, constituting an agreement with WDC for monies to be paid by them to this Council in respect of the site of The Lodge and the development of Leam View, had been lodged with WDC and it was expected that funds would be accordingly received – no date as yet.
- g) The Clerk had lodged a formal request for payment of the Section 106 monies due to this Council arising out of the development at The Cricketers. The Chairman had also been in correspondence with more than one member of the principal authorities on the same subject.

The Chairman added the following items:-

1. Progress has been made in preparation for a carnival in September (possibly). A working meeting is to take place on 25th March 2021.
2. He thanked Cllr Friar for putting together ID badges for councillors and the Clerk and invited Cllr Friar to submit any expenses he might have incurred.
3. As regards the public house, the Chairman expressed the view that maybe the defibrillator should be removed from there and installed at the Community Hall. The matter to be further reviewed and to be put on the Agenda for the next meeting. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Sudbury raised two supplementary points:-

- a) An update on the action by WCC in respect of footpath W123 (adjacent to 9 Lythall Close); the Clerk said he had recently a telephone call from the Footpaths Dept in which they asked to be treated on a confidential basis, but he could confirm from that conversation that the Dept does in fact have the matter in hand to the Clerk's satisfaction.
- b) He was concerned that insufficient attention had been given in recent times to the ditch adjoining the roadway in The Valley; the Clerk pointed out that David Elliston at WCC had been asked to clear the ditch, but he did not know the outcome. The views expressed that more than simple clearing out was required; this matter to be reviewed further and to be put on the Agenda for the next meeting. **Action: Clerk**

5. Traffic management issues

Cllr Munn gave a comprehensive update on the progress of his working party:

1. Firstly, as to proposals for Speedwatch action and secondly the installation of '20's Plenty' signs. There were two outstanding issues on the progress for the Speedwatch campaign; the principle points are having enough volunteers to support the scheme (the Clerk had recently referred to him two new volunteers which was good news) and an implication that an active Speedwatch team needed to be accompanied by a police officer. The likelihood of police officers being available for this type of action looked remote. There also appears to be an issue as to whether hi-viz jackets could be obtained at the expense of the police or otherwise.

2. He will finalise the area plan showing the locations of eight '20's Plenty' signs (the Clerk noted that the number of these locations is now AGREED by this Council. Previously there had been discussion about how many there should be. The quotation put forward by Cllr Munn for the total cost of these items (8 signs) is £504.85. It was RESOLVED that this quotation be accepted; proposed by Cllr Sudbury and seconded by Cllr Mrs Malin. It was AGREED that procurement of the signs and consequent cost would not be incurred by Cllr Munn until approval from WCC had been obtained. The Clerk to progress that.
Action: Clerk

6. Section 106 and CIL payments

The Chairman said that he had been pursuing enquiries of WDC and WCC with the objective of the Section 106 funds due in respect of The Cricketers being paid over. He had made contact with Graham Palmer who is a Section 106 monitoring officer at WCC. The Chairman is hopeful that this relationship will be productive. He reminded the Council that there are still outstanding issues from the letter from Mr Scott Tompkins that was received by us in the Autumn of 2020. The Chairman had been advised in the course of this enquiry that occupation of the Bovis second site had now got to numbers sufficient to trigger further payments by the developers.

7. Warwickshire County Council – update report

WCC Cllr Redford reported:-

1. The overall rate for Covid infection is now definitely falling. There has been one recent death in the county. The amount of infection for the over 60s is markedly falling.
2. Although Leamington is still listed in the top 10 of infected locations, there are two parts of the town which are still in the top 5.
3. The Pound Lane testing centre is still running and is much frequented.
4. The County had achieved vaccination of the occupants and staff of all care homes now.
5. HS2 had been persuaded not to disrupt the vaccination work at Stoneleigh Park.
6. The new Mega Lab is to be welcomed, providing diagnostic research in respect of vaccines.
7. The County are proud of the fact that they have supplied something in the region of 3,000 laptops for school children to work from home.
8. They are reviewing the street cleaning contract which has recently come to an end and as a result the jetting operations would be kept in-house.

8. Warwick District Council – update report

WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt reported:

1. A planning application has come in to create a factory between Baginton and Coventry which will manufacture batteries for electric motor vehicles. This is an important link with the major motor vehicle manufacturers in the West Midlands and will provide a considerable number of jobs for local people.
2. An all-weather pitch has been installed at Hampton Road in Warwick.
3. The local elections originally planned for 6th May 2021 will now go ahead. These will cover WCC and the election of a new Police Commissioner.
4. WDC are looking at options for closer work with Stratford D C. Nothing has been decided but the logic of the exercise is that the two South Warwickshire Districts have a lot in common (and less with the northern part of the County) and significant cost savings could be achieved by combining resources.
5. Following the above, a new head of ICT has been appointed to cover the work of both District Councils.

6. Because of the heavy cost incurred by WDC in the pandemic, a lot of work will need to be done on cost savings and this is an ongoing item.
7. The new budget for the current year has now been set so that council tax demands will shortly be issued.
8. She herself had written to the manager of the Planning Enforcement section of WDC seeking positive action in respect of 56 Southam Road. Members of this Council will be aware that there has been an apparent hiatus between the viewpoint taken by WCC Highways Dept and that of the Planning Enforcement Dept. The view that she has expressed is that, irrespective of WCC's standpoint on the boundary of the occupiers' property with that of the A425, the height of the new fence was in breach of planning rules and there is no reason why the Enforcement Dept should not take action to have it taken down. She was currently awaiting a reply from that Dept.

Several Cllrs expressed their dismay and dissatisfaction at the current state of affairs. WCC Cllr Redford interposed to say that WCC have taken action to challenge the position on the boundary and the matter is proceeding into court. The Clerk remarked that he had not been informed of this, either verbally or in writing.

9. Financial Matters

Due to a technical fault, the Clerk was unable to report directly and the Chairman did it for him:-

1. The bank account balances were as set out on the reconciliation statement prepared by the Clerk and circulated prior to the meeting. The balance on the investment account was £34,310.48 and the balance on the operating account was £16,916.64.
2. Three payments were to be authorised as per the list previously circulated by the Clerk and tabled. One of these related to the purchase by this Council of the standard textbook 'Arnold Baker'; it was AGREED whilst the amount previously agreed by the Chairman be authorised and the amount should be held pending receipt of the book.
3. Following a proposal by Cllr Sudbury at a previous meeting, a RESOLUTION was passed to approve the quotation of pruning a tree in the vicinity of The Lodge by the tree surgeons identified by Cllr Sudbury. He confirmed that the amount of the quotation still stands although the work should not actually be done until the spring. It was proposed that the quotation of £475 be approved; proposed by Cllr Friar and seconded by Cllr Mrs Malin.

10. Correspondence

The Clerk, having gained digital control, outlined the correspondence:-

1. He had reported to Severn Trent a serious water leak in Lewis Road at the last week without any reaction, but he had approached David Elliston at WCC who had persuaded Severn Trent Water to get into action and the matter was now satisfactorily concluded.
2. The renewed certificate from the Information Commissioners Office for the current year had now been received.
3. Dave Barber who is now head of Climate Change Action at WDC is doing a talk on the 25th February at 6.30pm. The Clerk proposes to attend, and it is open to the public generally.
4. An email had been received from ex-councillor Naomi Northey expressing her concern about various aspects of prejudice to wildlife plants; there were four issues in her email to which the Clerk had responded in consultation with the Chairman and there had not been any further communication from her. The Clerk pointed out that the significant complaint was that the Council's action in dealing with moles on the Playing Field; he pointed out that the Council has an obligation to preserve the safety of people using the Playing Field, hence the imposition of the mole catching services for decades.
5. The Chairman had been in general correspondence with FoRGE with different issues; none of which needed to be discussed at this stage.

11. Planning Matters

1. W/15/1635 - 56 Southam Road
2. 9 Lythall Close (ongoing)
3. W/20/1699 – 13 Thornley Close (Granted 01/02/2021)
4. W/20/617 – Land south of Chesterton Gardens (Refused 12/02/2021)
5. Canalside Development Plan Document Consultation (Ongoing)

12. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Friar said there was no further news on the Neighbourhood Plan

13. Update on the Playing Field

1. Cllr Follett said that weather conditions make it desirable to leave repair work on the skateboard park until March; he is obtaining precise costings on that which he will present to the March meeting of this Council. **Action: Cllr Follett**
2. The seat to the zip wire frame had been damaged by vandals and had been removed.
3. Wicksteed's quotation for the repair work of the swings and seat had been approved and they were due to start work tomorrow (Tuesday).
4. Following the failure to secure an FCC grant for the installation of the adult gym equipment, he was in the process of lodging an application for an HS2 grant. As FCC had looked for a matching grant from this Council, it appears that the HS2 fund does not expect a matching grant. The amount that he is looking to raise through this process is about £30,000.
5. A further aspect of this agenda item was action to be taken in respect of filling in the ditch adjacent to the site of The Lodge. Ex-Cllr Henry Marriott has reported on the drainage issues in respect of this ditch which can be conveniently divided into two parts. The 'lower' part connects to the land drain from the Playing Field while the 'upper' part does not. Therefore, there appears to be a case for filling in this part of the ditch; the FoRGE representation is that it could be made into a display area for wildflowers and a natural habitat for small animals. It was AGREED that a working party be set up to examine the issues comprising Cllr Sudbury, Cllr Hitchcox and Cllr Follett. **Action: Cllrs Sudbury, Hitchcox & Follett**
6. Cllr Sudbury raised again an issue which he had raised at the previous meeting – the lack of tidiness and appearance of the car park area and other public areas such as the bus shelter. The Clerk advised that these aspects come under the contractual services of Joe Ingall and it was AGREED that the Clerk would review these issues with the Ingall family. **Action: Clerk**

14. Review of pathway

1. Following on the Clerk's original letter to Henry Johnson, the Chairman had facilitated discussion between former Cllr Henry Marriott and Henry Johnson's agent who had previously invited this Council to discuss the proposed pathway from Offchurch Lane to the Radford Bottom lock. An amicable meeting between them had taken place and it was to be further reviewed. In broad terms, the possibility of a pathway through the grassland and wooded area adjacent to Radford Bottom lock thereby avoiding the construction of a tarmac footpath along the lane from Offchurch Lane to the road bridge over the lock (with consequent expense).
2. On enquiry from one of the Cllrs, the Chairman confirmed that he had written to HS2 Projects Dept to confirm this Council's support for their proposals concerning access to The Greenway.
3. Cllr Friar said that approaches had been received from people connected with the Village of Offchurch pressing for some kind of pathway, the extent of which was not clear. It appears that

these approaches have not come through Offchurch Parish Council (Chairman: Steve Palmer). It was AGREED that Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt would review the position with Offchurch Parish Council when she next attends one of their meetings.

15. Social Media policy

16.

The Clerk and Cllr Friar exchanged drafts on the policy and Cllr Friar had come to the conclusion that the documentation was not in a consolidated form appropriate for discussion as intended at this meeting. It was therefore AGREED that the matter to be discussed at the next meeting in March.

17. Update on School Matters

1. The Chairman invited the Clerk to explain that he had been approached by the Revd Katherine Pickford with the suggestion that those running the School would be happy to have a liaison person between the School Governing Body and this Council. The Clerk reminded the Council that this had previously been the case, conveniently worked alongside the Revd Pickford being a member of this Council. When she retired from the Council the process had lapsed. It appears that the liaison officer should be a member of this Council who attends meetings of the Governing Body as opposed to a member of that Body attending meetings of this Council. It was AGREED that adoption of a liaison officer should be taken up in principle - Cllr Sudbury to attend those running the School and resolve the finer details of the arrangement.
2. The Agenda items of new playground equipment and Sunbeams pre-school maintenance funding have been put on the Agenda at the specific request of Cllr Sudbury; he explained that he had been in regular contact with the School for a considerable time and understood that their management and financial problems. He had been approached by the Chairman of the PTA to see whether this Council could see fit to finance in whole or in part, either of these items.

The Clerk said he must give formal advice to this Council that considering the finance of expenditure of this Council on the School was bordering on illegality. He explained that WCC, WDC and this Council have different functions created by national legislation; finance for education is within the remit of WCC and this Council has no powers or duties in that respect. The Clerk further explained that the powers and duties of a parish council are set out in various bits of legislation; in particular the Local Government Act 1972, the parish council does not have any powers outside of those specifications. Whilst this Council could be sensitive to the problems of the School, he advised Cllrs that he would be unhappy to see Cllrs surcharged as a result of an audit of money spent on the School. In anticipation of this matter being raised at this meeting, he had obtained a note from Mr Crossling and he read this out. It states that a parish council has no power to spend money on items which are in the remit of another public authority. Cllr Sudbury then stated that he would not want this Council to be party to illegality and he is concerned as to how this Council might support the local School. He reminded the Council that the Chairman, the Clerk, and himself had had a meeting with the Head teacher and the Chair of Governors a year or so ago where it was obvious that the latter were not aware of Section 106 funding which was due to the School. He was concerned that the School should receive full appropriate finance which would be furnished to them. Cllr Carter expressed his approval of the Clerk's exposition on the legal position and suggested that the issues should be referred to the Finance Committee of this Council for further discussion. Cllr Friar, as Chairman of that Committee, said there was no point in such a referral as there was no power to allocate finance.

The Chairman intervened in the discussion at 9.30pm to point out that Standing Orders required the meeting to terminate unless it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders; it was so AGREED.

The Clerk said that some funds being made available to the Sunbeams pre-school could be a different issue because it is a registered charity separate from the School and their budget is not part of the monetary fiancés operated by WCC Education Dept. Care had to be taken however to consider what powers were being used by this Council under Section 137 of the 1972 Act or otherwise and have regard to the amount of any grant decided upon. The Chairman said that he was more comfortable with this issue because the Section 106 agreement in respect of the Bovis 2 site states "£58,435 to be applied towards the provision of pre-school provision within the village of Radford Semele". Cllr Sudbury indicated that the amount of need for Sunbeams amounted to about £23,000.

It was AGREED that Cllr Sudbury would revert to the School to obtain precise costings on the needs of the Sunbeams pre-school unit and this matter be put on the Agenda for the next meeting for further review.

Action: Cllr Sudbury Action: Clerk

18. Update on Sports & Social Club matters

Cllr Mrs Malin said there was nothing of substance to report.

19. Update report from Community Hall Committee

Cllr Mrs Malin further said there was nothing to report as both the Sports & Social Club and the Community Hall were closed. Both are subject to periodic checks. She did report on particular items:-

- a) She was enquiring about funding for the Hall with reference made to local grants made by Severn Trent Water on application for the installation of a new boiler and a CCTV system.
- b) Overtures had been received regarding arrangements for the elections in May to be held at the Hall in the usual way; this is likely once the mechanics of social distancing have been worked out.

20. Update on website

Cllr Friar said he had arranged for the website to be user-friendly in a number of different languages to cater for a minority of people in the locality; he was also working on email accounts for all the Cllrs so that each had a separate mailbox for contact by a member of the public who wanted to have access to a particular Cllr as opposed to a department of this Council.

21. Update on Covid-19 Support group arrangements

Cllr Friar said that he was working on having a modified version of the voting register to identify those in need of support of the Covid-19 support team.

22. Any other business

- 1. Cllr Carter had circulated a report on a meeting he attended on 29th January 2021; the Clerk had sought to attend the meeting but had been refused due to the shortage of spaces. In essence the meeting was a discussion on the prospective new South Warwickshire Plan.

22. Date of next meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.05pm and specifically thanked the visitors for their attendance.

Signed.....

Date..... 2021

Chairman of the Parish Council

Counter signed.....

Date.....2021

Clerk to the Parish Council