

# RADFORD SEMELE PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES

A virtual meeting of the Parish Council was held on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March 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, Cllr Musa and Cllr J Sudbury

**In attendance:** WCC Cllr Redford, WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt, Barbara Wyatt (FoRGE) and, for the early part of the meeting, Mr Ransford of 9 Lythall Close was in attendance and addressed the meeting

### 1. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

No apologies were needed and there were no declarations of interest.

In the temporary absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman invited Mr Ransford to address the meeting. He submitted that he was entitled to have a key to the bollard to be installed by WCC on footpath W123; he said that for many years people had driven motor vehicles along the footpath from Lewis Road to gain access to the field beyond including the land which now forms part of his garden. He said he had retained the services of a local solicitor. He was not sure what was going on but understood that his solicitor was in correspondence with WCC Legal Dept. There were no questions or comments were tendered by any members of this Council save that the Vice Chairman pointed out there was legal argument between Mr Ransford's legal advisors and the Legal Dept of WCC; Mr Barnard of the Footpaths Dept was in the position of following the advice tendered by the WCC Legal Dept. It was a matter for WCC to come to a conclusion on how the footpath should be managed. The Clerk said he would send a brief report to Mr Barnard to put him in the picture as to the discussion at this meeting.

**Action: Clerk**

### 2. Approval of the Minutes of the Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

The Minutes of the meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 were approved, subject to two minor amendments to be inserted by the Clerk subsequent to the meeting; proposed by Cllr Friar and seconded by Cllr Mrs Malin.

### 3. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

Sundry issues dealt with below

### 4. Traffic management issues

1. Cllr Munn had circulated a promotional brochure prepared by Safespeed from slides from a virtual webinar which he had attended. This is a system designed to check drivers' speeds and keep a record of them. He also circulated his report in which he expressed the view that likely cost of this Safespeed system was approximately £10,000 and was not worth it.
2. He had received notice of more volunteers to make up a community Speedwatch project that now totalled 9. He has submitted details to PC Ed King for approval; the indication is that teams cannot operate unless supervised by a police officer and he is waiting for PC King's views on the current position.
3. He had not received a response from Archer Safety Signs, the manufacturers of the '20's Plenty' signs, on his enquiry as to whether they had successfully deployed their signs elsewhere. Cllr Sudbury had received contact from his councillor friend that Devon County Council had demanded removal of the '20's Plenty' signs in their area with the threat of punitive action by DCC. Cllr Munn had also been in contact with a fellow local councillor in Northamptonshire who reported that Northamptonshire County Council had taken the same adverse view. WCC Cllr Redford had sought to get a change of view from WCC officers without success so far. The Chairman expressed the view that it may be possible to get a change of heart within the ambit of a new working group, instigated by WCC Cllr Mrs Seccombe,

currently Leader of WCC., called Town and Parish Councils & WCC Reference Group – Community Futures.

4. The Chairman thanked Cllrs Munn, Sudbury and Friar for the extensive input into this project which they have given.

## **5. Section 106 and CIL payments**

1. The WDC funding letter had been received in respect of Section 106 money due for The Cricketers site; the Clerk was in the process of negotiating the terms of the funding letter before it was agreed. This is for the purpose of arguing this Council's case that it would be able to expend all or part of the money on maintenance of items on the Playing Field as opposed to capital acquisition only.
2. The Chairman had drafted a letter proposed to be sent to Mr Scott Tompkins in reply to his letter of 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020; that letter was a belated response to the Clerk's letter of 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and left a number of issues unanswered. The Chairman and the Clerk are in the process of setting the terms of this letter to be dispatched shortly.
3. The Chairman recounted the process to get himself included in the loop with the Community Futures Group. This comprises senior officers at WCC brought together by WCC Cllr Seccombe, for the purpose of improving relationships between Town and Parish Councils and WCC. The Group is proposing to meet on a quarterly basis, the next meeting being in May. The Chairman had missed their meeting in March but had since been offered the opportunity for Council representatives to meet with WCC Officers, Rob Powell and Charles Barlow, to discuss our Councils outstanding issues. It was proposed that the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Cllr Carter and the Clerk will arrange a meeting with Messrs. Powell and Barlow as soon as Covid regulations allow. Cllr Carter made the point that it might be wise to prepare a priority list from the items in the letter of 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019 in the expectation that it would not be possible to obtain co-operation from WCC on all the points raised in that letter.

## **6. Warwickshire County Council – update report**

WCC Cllr Redford reported:-

1. Countywide, there are now falling rates of infection in the pandemic although there are five wards identified in the local area as being in the top ten for rates but this should be set against the fact that rates overall are falling.
2. Vaccinations in the locality are now well underway and the numbers of local people who have been vaccinated is significantly increasing.
3. In reply to a question by Cllr Hitchcox on the potential repair of School Lane (in the wake of a repair resulting from deliveries to The Cricketers site) WCC Cllr Redford said that the request for repair had not 'gone off the list' at WCC Highways Dept.

## **7. Warwick District Council – update report**

1. WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt circulated a report on which there were no notes or enquiries.
2. Cllr Sudbury raised an issue with her as to WDC's potential policy for changing arrangements for rubbish removal and waste recycling. He tabled on screen a schedule depicting different bins, the thrust of his submission being that there appear to be differences between the process now operated by Stratford District Council and possible process to be operated by WDC. She said that no decision had been made by WDC as yet but she agreed to take back his submissions and the information he had tabled for further enquiry with WDC officers.

## **8. Financial Matters**

1. The Clerk had circulated a bank reconciliation statement from Lloyds Bank; the balance on the operating account was approximately £5,900 whilst the balance on the investment account was approximately £91,000. This large figure was a result of two transfers of £5,000 he had made from the operating account and the injection into that account of approximately £46,000 received from WDC from the Open Space Fund (mentioned at previous meetings).

2. He had circulated a list of payments to be authorised (14 in all) annexed to the list and copies of all the relevant invoices. Including several payments to the Clerk – his pay for the fourth quarter, payment for the use of his home as an office and reimbursement of minor expenses. Payments were approved; proposed by Cllr Mrs Malin and seconded by Cllr Friar. – the list to be lodged with the Minutes of this meeting
3. The Clerk proposed that new banking arrangements be opened with HSBC Bank; the Chairman of the Finance Committee and himself had focused on the fact that current protection of bank assets were covered under the Government scheme up to £85,000 but this Council now holds and will hold sums in excess of that figure. The proposal was accepted; proposed by Cllr Sudbury and seconded by Cllr Musa. Cllr Friar and the Clerk will make the necessary arrangements. **Action: Cllr Friar & Clerk**
4. Cllr Friar spoke briefly to the year end accounts. He put on screen the accounts which he had prepared for the year end audit. In the income section he had distinguished between receipts of a regular/ordinary nature and the specific receipts of Open Space money. He pointed out that this money together with further funds received from WDC had to be ring-fenced and appropriate book-keeping maintained to distinguish expenditure from these funds as opposed to Council's general funds. The Clerk advised that it was not open to this Council to make a simple decision to spend all or part of the funds without reference to WDC; the funding letters contain conditions of reporting back at each stage.
5. Cllr Friar had circulated a report on the prospective Internal Audit, it was AGREED that the Clerk will instruct Mrs Louise Best again as Internal Auditor but, between them, Cllr Friar and the Clerk would put to her some explicit requirements in the audit process. Whilst Mrs Best is an experienced Internal Auditor, and has regularly reported that the affairs of this Council are well regulated, Cllr Friar's concern is that, in the light of requirements by the Audit Regulations, there is a need for her report to be more explicit on aspects of internal control with reference to eight points which he had circulated. It was AGREED that between them Cllr Friar and the Clerk would prepare a letter of instruction to Mrs Best to incorporate these issues. Cllr Friar said it might be appropriate to have the Internal Auditor review internal controls more than once a year, for example four reviews in a year or a series of reviews stretching over a period of years. **Action: Cllr Friar & Clerk**
6. With reference to the Neighbourhood Plan, Cllr Friar said it would be necessary for the Working Party to incur expenditure in promoting the publicity for the Plan which is the subject of the Referendum on 6<sup>th</sup> May. He sought authority to incur that expenditure estimated at approximately £2,000. It was RESOLVED that this expenditure be approved; proposed by Cllr Sudbury and seconded by Cllr Hitchcox.

## 9. Correspondence

The Clerk outlined items of correspondence:-

1. The Chairman and himself had booked in for a virtual seminar in two days time when the guest speaker will be Jackie Weaver.
2. The Chairman had written an email to the Clerk of Bidford Town Council to support their representations to WCC regarding speeding traffic.
3. The Clerk had arranged for Highways Dept to repair the footpath alongside the School and to investigate a complaint by a resident of a dangerous tree branch over the A425
4. The Clerk will respond to our insurance brokers to accept the revised cover proposed for 2021 / 2022

## 10. Planning Matters

1. W/15/1635 - 56 Southam Road – court proceedings pending
2. 9 Lythall Close (ongoing)
3. W/20/1930 – 8 Chance Fields – application granted
4. Canalside Development Plan Document Consultation (Ongoing)

## 11. Update on the Playing Field

1. Cllr Follett had circulated a report on the skateboard refurbishment and confirmed a precise estimate of costs of £7,700 + VAT. RESOLVED this expenditure be approved, proposed by Cllr Hitchcox and seconded by Cllr Friar. Cllr Follett is to proceed with the arrangements and the work to be placed with Allworks Construction Ltd, failing which to be placed with CJ & ND Wright. **Action: Cllr Follett**
2. Cllr Follett reported on the conclusions of the working party concerning the ditch adjacent to the old site of The Lodge, supported by Cllr Sudbury. In summary, it is proposed to fill in that part of the ditch which is to the south west side of the Playing Field, i.e. that part of the ditch nearest to the old site of The Lodge. It is emphasised that the other part of the ditch is for drainage purposes and the drainage system from the Playing Field accesses it. It is proposed to deal with the filled in area with soil and rocks with input from FoRGE as to plants. The working group had observed that the concrete blocks placed across the pathway by AC Lloyd at an initial stage of the development were unsatisfactory and it was thought that the surface of the pathway could be improved. It appears that AC Lloyd have ideas for improving the area; it was AGREED that the Chairman, Cllr Sudbury and Cllr Carter would meet with the AC Lloyd site manager, Dave Alcock, to discuss arrangements for improving the footpath. **Action: Chairman, Cllrs Sudbury & Carter**
3. Cllr Follett had circulated a report with a precise estimate from Wicksteed for the replacement of the cableway for a cost of £8,515 + VAT. Associated earth works will incur extra costs, as specified, but he confirmed that the total cost of the project will be £10,215. RESOLVED this expenditure be approved, proposed by Cllr Carter and seconded by Cllr Hitchcox. **Action: Cllr Follett**
4. Cllr Follett outlined that he had completed a grant application to the HS2 Community Fund in respect of the outdoor gym on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021; he has put in a bid for £30,000 and awaits their response.
5. Cllr Friar reported that he and Cllr Hitchcox had come up with three costing alternatives for replacement dog bins. He shared screen with three estimates. The Glasdon estimate was approved; proposed by Cllr Sudbury and seconded by Cllr Munn. **Action: Cllr Friar**

## 12. Update on pathway to Radford Bottom Lock and The Greenway

The Chairman had had various discussions with ex-councillor Henry Marriott. The latter had sought to continue a dialogue with Henry Johnson's land agent concerning the pathway proposal previously discussed. No response had been received which indicated an impasse.

Mrs Wyatt raised the issue of opening up the viaduct to take the pathway across the canal; Cllr Sudbury pointed out that this was a non-starter because of liability for the condition of the viaduct; its ongoing maintenance was too great a financial obligation for this Council and also probably the owners, British Rail, took a similar view. Cllr Hitchcox pointed out that the cost of renovation of the viaduct or alternatively its demolition was too great a financial burden for this Council. The Chairman reported that Mr Marriott is in the process of contacting the National Farmers Union to see whether an alternative approach as to dealing with the footpath land can be identified.

## 13. School Matters

Cllr Sudbury said that he and Cllr Follett had met with representatives of Sunbeams and had carried out a review of their building. It is in a bad shape, having been a run down building given to Sunbeams. He said it was not appropriate for this Council to spend money on the building but that he hoped to assist them obtain money under the Section 106 agreement for the Bovis No 2 site.

The Chairman suggested that an avenue might be possible through his connection with Graham Palmer who is the current WCC monitor for Section 106 payments. He calculated that there was now 50% occupancy on the Bovis No 2 site so that Bovis were liable to complete their payments under Section 106

**Under Standing Orders it was agreed to extend the duration of the meeting beyond 9.30 pm - agreed.**

#### **14. Sports & Social Club Matters**

1. Cllr Sudbury had tabled papers relating to a request from the Club to have temporary use of further land outside the Club from 14<sup>th</sup> April until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021. By virtue of an agreement reached in 2011 with this Council, the Club had occupied an area outside the Club building to install a number of outdoor seating units. Cllr Sudbury had conferred with the Clerk prior to this meeting and the consensus is that if this Council agreed to the request then it would be with a clear written agreement specifying the term of the permission and the precise measurement of the area which they are to enjoy. At the same time, the terms of the agreement of 2011 should be updated as they had not been reviewed in the interim. The Clerk advised that with reference to the original agreement and the current proposed agreement, it was not advisable for this Council to enter into a formal lease with the Club; any permission should be covered by the terms of a simple licence which would include terms as to revocation of the licence.
2. Cllr Friar had prepared an excellent plan to accompany the licence agreement. The Club proposed that the existing area should be surfaced with one or more types of materials, one of which appeared to be limestone. Cllr Musa argued against the use of limestone as a health hazard. Cllr Follett suggested that a material known as grasscrete could be used instead – a form of perforated plastic matting through which the grass can grow. This would avoid harm to the grassed area which the Club were anxious to protect.
3. It was agreed that agreement be reached as to the temporary extra use coupled with the provision of the original area under precise terms to be set out in writing prepared by the Vice Chairman and the Clerk; proposed by Cllr Hitchcox and seconded by Cllr Mrs Malin.

#### **15. Community Hall Committee**

1. Cllr Mrs Malin reported on the general situation with reference to Sports & Social Club and also the Community Hall. The Community Hall and the Club are sharing the cost of installation of CCTV for both the Community Hall and Club premises. The painting/decorating refurbishment plan was underway in the Club. Application to Severn Trent Water had been made for grant funding to cover the cost of a new boiler in the Community Hall. The Hall Committee had carried out a risk assessment and found a number of chairs out of 150 had mould created by damp due to the premises being closed.
2. There were now only 5 members on the Hall Committee and most of whom had been in post for a long time; they are looking for new recruits. Ex - councillor Chater is overwhelmed as booking clerk at the present time – there has been a big upsurge in enquiries in the light of change to Government regulations on social distancing. The Committee are therefore looking for a booking clerk to replace Mrs Higgins who has now retired.

#### **16. Website**

Cllr Friar said there was no update to report.

#### **17. Covid-19 Support Group arrangements**

Cllr Friar said the support group was still in place but there was no update to report.

#### **18. Any other business**

1. At the suggestion of Cllr Sudbury it was AGREED that the defibrillator at The White Lion Public House be left in situ until further review.
2. There was debate concerning debris in the ditch at The Valley; Mrs Wyatt expressed her concern that the local householders were putting rubbish in the ditch. It was AGREED that the position would be further investigated by Cllr Sudbury in conjunction with the Clerk who said he understood that WCC had or were to carry out clearance activity.
3. The Clerk said he had inserted into the Agenda an item for security of the pond; although general refurbishment of the pond had been put in suspension pending enquiry by FoRGE etc, He was concerned that security should be addressed without delay. This was part of the Council's responsibility for risk management; he was supported in this by Cllr Friar. Cllr Sudbury had anticipated

the discussion by obtaining quotations for fresh equipment in respect of the site, namely two items of signage totalling £25 and a life belt for the sum of £350. On screen, the estimates for these items were displayed REOLVED that they be accepted, proposed by Cllr Hitchcox and seconded by Cllr Friar. It was further agreed that Cllr Sudbury would discuss with ex- councillor Henry Marriott the condition and security of the fencing around the area and report back to this Council.

**19. Date of next meeting**

- a) The Chairman explained that it was proposed to have an ordinary meeting of this Council on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021 with a normal Agenda. Legal rules required that this Council should have its Annual General Meeting in the month of May (it is not a moveable date). He was concerned to take advantage of lockdown regulations to hold such a meeting whilst it could be presented on a virtual basis. He then proposed that the subsequent meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> May would be an ordinary meeting to deal with general business (quite likely to be an open plan meeting whilst conforming to social distancing). He and the Clerk had identified the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 as a suitable date for the AGM. A minimum of business will be discussed at that meeting, being the election of officers and appointment of committees and little more. The Clerk advised that it might be necessary to consider outcome from the Internal Auditor’s report if that was received by that stage. He said allowance had to be made for approval of the report and completion of the AGAR form for the External Auditor at the end of June meeting of this Council because the External Auditor’s deadline for submission of paperwork is 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021. The meetings on 26<sup>th</sup> April and 4<sup>th</sup> May were agreed.
- b) Current rules require to be held an Annual Parish Meeting (distinguished from the Annual General Meeting of this Council). The APM has to be held between the beginning of April and the end of June which allows a narrow window to arrange a meeting. The Clerk suggested that the Annual Parish Meeting be held on 26<sup>th</sup> April along with the ordinary meeting; this would be in line with historical arrangements and was in the circumstances, the best arrangement
- c) Mrs Wyatt reminded the Council that the Annual General Meeting of FoRGE is to take place on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March on a virtual basis; the Chairman said that he had arranged to attend.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.10 pm.

Signed.....

Date..... 2021

**Chairman of the Parish Council**

Counter signed.....

Date.....2021

**Clerk to the Parish Council**