

RADFORD SEMELE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES

A virtual meeting of the Parish Council was held on Monday 28th September 2020 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 A Malin, Cllr Mrs J P Malin, Cllr R Munn and Cllr T Musa

In attendance: WCC Cllr Redford

1. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

There were apologies for absence from WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt and Cllr J Sudbury. Cllr Sabin declared an interest in the potential donation to British Legion and Cllr Friar likewise in respect of the Scouts.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Council meeting on 27th July 2020

The Minutes of the virtual Council meeting held on the 27th July 2020 were approved, proposed by Cllr Friar, and seconded by Cllr Musa.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes of the Council meeting on 27th July 2020

1. The Chairman referred to paragraph 5 of the previous Minutes comprising a detailed analysis of current outstanding matters; in particular to sub paragraph 4. He expressed his serious concern to be minuted that we still await an updated scenario referred to in the detailed email from Lucy Hammond at WDC Planning Dept. This derived from the totally inadequate way in which planning consent was originally granted to Bovis to develop the second phase of their site; due to inadequate specification and control of the conditions under which they would proceed, we now had a messy situation. Ms Hammond had gone back to Bovis but clearly was having a hard task getting sense out of the situation; this had direct bearing on the exit facility from the Bovis site to Offchurch Lane. In simple terms, Bovis were in breach of the planning permission.
2. The Chairman referred to sub paragraph 6 which had reviewed the question of speed control on the major roads in the Village, in particular Lewis Road. He had had an ongoing correspondence with PC Ed King including some today (28th September); he found it unsatisfactory that a concerted lack of action by WCC and the Police meant a continuing problem of hazard with traffic speeds in the Village. In the correspondence, PC King stated that speed checks on Lewis Road may be possible at a limited number of sites along the road but this would be dependent on having a line of sight and somewhere suitable to stop/pull vehicles over if necessary, this was further compromised by parked vehicles. Static checks could only be carried out during daylight hours. It was, therefore, resolved to put speed checks/monitoring of Southam Road forward as a suggested Policing Priority to Warwick Rural East Community Forum Policing Priorities on-line vote.

4. Traffic management issues

1. Following on from the above, the Chairman referred to the stringent letter that he and the Clerk sent to Mr Scott Tompkins, Asst Director at WCC. The objective was to draw Mr Tompkins' attention to the fact that his subordinates had not progressed matters arising out of this Council's letter of 8th May 2019. The Clerk said Mr Tompkins had had the letter for three weeks and he proposed to chase it up at the expiry of a month. Cllr Redford intervened to say that he would get on to Mr Tompkins to get some response and if that failed then he suggested that this Council should then contact his superior officer at WCC, Mr Mark Ryder. The letter to Mr Tompkins had been circulated to all Cllrs.
Action: WCC Cllr Redford

2. Cllr Carter enquired whether the Clerk had been in touch with Henry Johnson concerning a potential footpath between the Village and the canal. The Clerk had written to Mr Johnson who had referred the matter to his agent; the latter showed interest but wanted a detailed plan to show what this Council had in mind. This is to be put in hand, perhaps using Parish Online.
Action: Chairman, Clerk & Cllr Friar
3. The Clerk had asked RoSPA whether they would do a traffic safety report in the context of the above; RoSPA had stated it was not within their remit but would refer it to a sister organisation but nothing had transpired. It was AGREED that the Clerk would try and find an alternative resource.
Action: Clerk
4. The Chairman said he had reviewed in outline the Highway Consultation Paper where this Council, with others, was invited to make representations – the end date was 22nd November 2020. It was AGREED that the Chairman, Clerk, Cllr Friar and Cllr Hitchcox would form a working group to prepare written representations.
Action: Chairman, Clerk, Cllr Friar and Cllr Hitchcox
5. On the issue of speed checks and parking in the Village, WCC Cllr Redford said that it was an inadequate response to say that there were insufficient police officers in the County to manage the position; there were more officers than there had been in recent years – now over 1,000 officers so that was not a good argument. He said the Police should be urged to take some action both as to speeding vehicles and parked vehicles.

5. Section 106 and CIL payments

The Chairman and the Clerk reported that there had been no progress on these issues since the last Council meeting; the letter to Mr Scott Tompkins refers. At the beginning of August, the Clerk had written three letters to David Anderson of the Open Space Dept of WDC (referred to in paragraph 6 of the previous Minutes). In spite of earlier suggestions from Mr Anderson, he had not followed this up by responding to the three letters or arranging payment of three different funds referred to in the three letters. The matter is to be pursued.
Action: Chairman & Clerk

6. Warwickshire County Council – update report

1. Recently two crisis lines had been set up by WCC in respect of mental health generally and suicide issues in particular.
2. Cllrs will be aware of WCC's proposals for a reform of local government to create a unitary authority for Warwickshire – the paper in response from WDC is in the course of preparation.
3. There will be a Government white paper produced shortly (? In October 2020) to review the process of local government; the WCC proposal will be linked up to this.
4. The Clerk confirmed that he and the Chairman and Cllr Friar will take part tomorrow (29th September) in a virtual session commissioned by WALC to consider the WCC proposals for unitary authority.

7. Warwick District Council – update report

In her absence WDC Cllr Mrs Leigh-Hunt had tabled her report; the Clerk said he was available to answer questions on it but there were none.

8. Financial Matters

1. The Clerk reported that the bank account balances were as shown on the bank reconciliation statement which he had circulated prior to the meeting. The balance on the operating account is £17,240 approximately and the balance on the investment account is £34,307 approximately.
2. The Council authorised payments as per the list circulated by the Clerk prior to the meeting; in particular, the payment to Cllr Friar of £137.54 in respect of his expenses incurred in the online costs for virtual meetings and a payment to the Clerk of £2,779.39 representing the current quarter's pay at the enhanced figure recently agreed together with a back pay payment in respect of the previous quarter. The payments were approved, proposed by Cllr Carter, and seconded by Cllr Friar.
3. The Council authorised payment of regular donations set out on the sheet tabled and previously circulated. This comprises payments to charitable outlets. The Council decided to allocate the same amounts for payment as in the previous year. This was proposed by Cllr Mrs Malin and seconded by Cllr Follett.
4. The Clerk suggested that it would be practical in respect of WALC training courses for him to have discretion to commit the Council to particular courses relevant to the Council's business on the basis that he had prior approval from the Chairman. The reason for this is the high demand currently on WALC training course places necessitating speed in securing a booking; Cllr Carter underscored this by pointing out that he had nearly missed participation in a recent planning course because of the turnaround times. It was AGREED to pursue this, proposed by Cllr Musa, and seconded by Cllr Follett.
5. Cllr Friar outlined the need to adopt the new national scales published by NALC for pay of Clerks; this was to bring the Clerk's recent agreement for an increase in pay in line with the scales for future progress. (This was discussed at the previous Council meeting) This was AGREED, proposed by Cllr Friar and seconded by Cllr Hitchcox.
6. The Clerk had received from David Chater, Chairman of the Community Hall Management Committee, a receipted invoice of approximately £7,000. This was from contractors who carried out works to the Hall. This was accompanied by a request that a grant of £5,000 be made to the Hall by this Council; this was based on a budget item which was included by this Council's Finance Committee for the purposes of budget/Precept at the beginning of the year. It was AGREED that this donation should be made in accordance with the budgetary proposals, proposed by Cllr Friar and seconded by Cllr Hitchcox.
7. The Clerk reported that the online banking facilities are now in place and he and Cllr Friar will implement the payments authorised by this Council meeting.
8. The Clerk and Cllr Friar had been in written and verbal dialogue with the External Auditor who had raised some queries on the Audit papers (as might be expected). They anticipate that the Audit will be signed off before the date of the next Council meeting.
9. The Chairman reminded the Council that he was still working on the facilitation of a plaque alongside the pear tree in the Playing Field; when he has obtained one or more quotations for the cost of the plaque and the pins to hold it, he will report back to this Council. **Action: Chairman**

9. Correspondence

There had been a large number of items of correspondence referred to by the Clerk but to save time the more important ones were selected; they comprised two categories, those were of historical note and those for future action.

1. Correspondence had been received, via NextDoor, by a resident highlighting a need for more discipline in the wearing of face masks in the Village Shop. Accordingly, a notice requiring the wearing of masks had been put on the noticeboard and on the website. The resident had been informed and had expressed his satisfaction at the action taken.

2. Correspondence had been received from different people on traffic issues; one enquired whether this Council had thought about speed humps on Lewis Road and another expressed the strong need for a pedestrian crossing on the A425. The Clerk had replied to both of them.
3. Two residents on the Bovis site complained respectively of undue noisy building activity at unsocial hours and complained that the Semele park area had been closed off and he was unable to exercise his dog. The Clerk had replied to both of these people to the effect that Semele Park was under the legal structure of a management company created by Bovis and was not under the remit of this Council.
4. The Chairman and the Clerk had been involved in a correspondence enquiry from Ms Cooley in the process of writing the FoRGE newsletter; this contemplated traffic management issues and funding arrangements pursuant to Section 106 and CIL. The Chairman and the Clerk had responded to the lady expressing thanks for the interest but with a recommendation that matters be left to this Council to pursue (in the light of the matters referred to in these Minutes).
5. Whilst not strictly correspondence, Cllr Hitchcox mentioned an issue with the unkempt hedgerows in the pathway adjoining the School and that he had been called out to review it. The Clerk confirmed that Cllr Hitchcox had conferred with him and a result of which the Clerk had written to Mrs Steele at FoRGE to request action by FoRGE to look after the overgrown hedgerows in particular and the other footpath adjoining the fields at the back of the Village. He had not had a reply.

10. Planning Matters

Cllr Carter spoke to the planning seminar run by WALC which he attended a week or so earlier. He tabled a report to outline the content of the seminar; various changes in planning procedure which had been proposed by a Government white paper where the consultation closes on 29th October 2020. He said it is imperative this Council table a response as the new scheme would have the potential to undo all the hard work that this Council had undertaken in recent years.

The proposal to give a Planning Authority power to create zones for development has the potential to override the representation made in the Neighbourhood Plan, the construction of the Village Envelope in recent times and the decision of the Government Planning Inspector who refused development on the field adjoining the Church. It was AGREED that the Planning Committee would prepare written representations to pick up on the consultation process as soon as possible.

Action: Planning Committee

1. W/15/1635 - 56 Southam Road
The Clerk said there had been no further development on issues concerning 56 Southam Road.
2. 9 Lythall Close (ongoing)
The Clerk said there had been no further development on 9 Lythall Close. He had today sent an email to WCC Footpaths Dept for an update on the latter but had not received a reply.
3. W/19/1772 – Land at The Valley
Cllr Carter said it is well known that the appeal in respect of the land at the Valley was dismissed on the 13th August 2020.
4. W/20/0552 – 8 Williams Road
Cllr Carter reported that the application in respect of 8 Williams Road seems to have disappeared off the paperwork.
5. W/20/1120 – 7 St Nicholas Terrace
Cllr Carter reported that the application in respect of this address has been withdrawn.
6. 68 Southam Road

Cllr Carter said he had been unable to track any Planning Department investigation in respect of 68 Southam Road, but he would continue enquiries.

11. Update on the Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Friar reported that the papers were now with the Examiner appointed by WDC. This Council had no hand in that, and the outcome will have to be awaited. If favourable, the matter would proceed to a public referendum; when that would take place was uncertain as the whole issue of public elections and voting next year was subject to a resolution of the current pandemic.

12. Update on the Playing Field

1. Cllr Follett had lodged the necessary papers with FCC Communities Foundation (formerly WREN). They had come back for more information and he and the Clerk were in the process of putting that together.
Action: Cllr Follett & Clerk
2. He had carried out an extensive survey on the items identified by the last RoSPA report for repair. He had been working on getting these repaired. In the course of the review, he had identified that a specialist in play equipment, Wicksteed, were open to providing annual reports similar to that done by RoSPA and on a more economical basis. They also carry a support service so that if they found repairs were necessary, they would then carry them out. The Clerk confirmed that over the years in attending the Annual Clerks Conference, he had come across exhibitions by Wicksteed and their staff and he was favourably impressed.
3. The skateboard area will need resurfacing and Cllr Follett will look at this. **Action: Cllr Follett**
4. Whilst not strictly Playing Field, he said that he had been considering the position over the telephone box; it was time some action was taken but the difficulty was finding a contractor who was prepared to refurbish it. The items of kit could be purchased by him, but the work really needed to be carried out by a professional rather than volunteers. It was AGREED to pursue thought as to a suitable contractor.
Action: Cllr Follett
5. Concern was expressed that there had recently been large gatherings of people on the Playing Field for social activity when the Government's social distancing guidelines had not been followed. It was thought that two of the occasions were organised parties and there were a considerable number of people present – no reference had been made to this Council for permission to hold such parties or seek any advice. The Clerk advised that it was not the function of Cllrs to go on patrol for such gatherings but as a matter of policy, this Council considered that it would make clear that such gatherings had no endorsement from this Council. People who met together in such circumstances did so on their own responsibility. The Clerk pointed out that the real option was for the Police to be called to a particular incident. Following discussion, it was thought that steps could be taken to create signage in the area of the Playing Field pointing out that Government social distancing requirements should be met.
Action: Cllrs Follett, Friar & Clerk
6. In passing, the missing dog waste bins were reviewed; Cllr Hitchcox is in the process of obtaining these and in addition it was reported that the Chairman and the Clerk had given thought to a resident's complaint that a large disused oil drum out on the fields was overflowing with dog waste bags abandoned by dog walkers. It is positioned not on the public footpath but on private land, so the issue is to persuade the landowner to take some action. It was AGREED that a letter should be written to the landowner by the Clerk once Cllr Friar and the Clerk had established who the landowner was (hopefully using Parish Online). The Clerk has also received a resident's request for an additional dog waste bin to be erected in the area of The Valley/Valley Road.
Action: Cllrs Hitchcox & Friar

13. Update on Scout Hut

Cllr Friar reported that there was no fresh news on the Scout Hut.

14. Update report on Sports & Social Club matters

Cllr Mrs Malin and Cllr A Malin reported that the Club had reopened in recent months and was doing well. There was a new committee and approximately 30 new members in the pipeline. Social distancing in the Club was a problem but steps had been taken to tackle that. The doors had been taken off the Committee room to make additional space.

15. Update report from Community Hall Committee

Cllr Mrs Malin reported that Mr Chater and Mrs Follett had put in a lot of hard work in preparing terms and conditions of hiring and working out the practicalities of sanitising and cleansing the premises in between hirings. Potentially it was possible to have functions such as line dancing and yoga with a number of people because they could spread out and Government regulations allowed higher numbers. However, those numbers may be altered by the Government in the foreseeable future. Otherwise, meetings had been restricted to six people. Currently the Hall is closed (advice received from insurers).

16. Update on School matters

There was nothing to report.

17. Report on the website

1. Cllr Friar said there had been a delay in marketing the new function of Creative Manager; that was to be put in hand. He did not see a need for authorisation of a contract price as this had been authorised by the previous Council meeting.
2. It had been AGREED in principle that the Council should continue with Parish Online from year to year and Cllr Friar was of the view that a specific resolution for this was not required, having been previously discussed.
3. He said that the Clerk had referred to him regulations issued by Government in the last year or so which had an effective date of 22nd September 2020. This is geared to making access to any website by persons with a disability much easier than hitherto. He felt that the design of the website covered a lot of the points in issue, but he will explore them with the website creator, Ms Buozova. The Clerk had also referred to a NALC paper underscoring the need for equality and diversity policy which he will look at with the Clerk. The Clerk confirmed that whilst there was no existing policy, this Council had followed the principles for some years. **Action: Cllr Friar & Clerk**

18. Update on Covid-19 Support group arrangements

Cllr Friar reported that things were relatively quiet at present but if there is a second wave of the pandemic then he expected the group to become active again. He had circulated to Cllrs a copy of his email to all of the supporters and volunteers thanking them for their participation so far.

19. Review of emergency procedures

In the absence of Cllr Sudbury, there was no report.

20. Any Other Business

1. It was confirmed that the Clerk, Chairman and Cllr Friar will participate in a WALC seminar on 29th September 2020, relating to the forthcoming Government White Paper on the future of Local Councils, which is due to be issued shortly.
2. It was AGREED that the Clerk should now respond to the request that the WDC Chairman wishes to visit the Council at one of their meetings; the meeting selected will be February 2021. **Action: Clerk**

3. Cllr Friar said an issue had arisen where the External Auditor had entered a discussion about an assets register; whilst the assets were currently identified by the Clerk and contained in a schedule from year to year it was necessary to put the matter on a more formal footing; he and the Clerk work on a suitable draft document. **Action: Cllr Friar & Clerk**

4. The Chairman said he understood that Cllr Sudbury was seeking to draw together members of the working party to review the refurbishment of the pond.

21. Date of next meeting

As the Chairman and the Clerk will not now be abroad at the time of the next proposed meeting, it was AGREED that this will take place on 26th October 2020 (in virtual format). The meeting closed at 9.45 pm

Signed..... Date.....

Chairman of the Parish Council

Counter signed..... Date.....

Clerk to the Parish Council