

Minutes of PCM, Wyck Rissington Parish Council

Held in the Village Hall on Monday 4th December 2023, 18:00

Councillors Present: Cllrs Cook, Ponti, Montague, Finnemore and Gorton
In attendance: 7 members of the public, Cllr Mark Mackenzie-Charrington

- 041223/1 Cllr. Cook opened the meeting.
- 041223/2 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved
- 041223/3 No declarations of interest were declared
- 041223/4 Apology for absence was received for Cllr. Andrew Maclean
- 041223/5 Public Session (maximum of 15 minutes) :
No members of the public chose to speak at this point.
- 041223/8 Cllr Mark Mackenzie-Charrington spoke. His report is uploaded onto the WRPC website.
- 041223/6 Peter Watson updated the PC on the Grafters Appeal. He explained that the Appeal Hearing has been notified that WRPC will be represented and since the WRPC EGM there has been a further 179 documents uploaded onto the planning portal. Peter Watson and Simon Gorton will attend the hearing, with Peter making the representation. The Environment Agency has now raised a possible concern regarding flood risk and Highways are also to now make an assessment. Lower Slaughter PC has submitted a detailed submission against and he would attempt to liaise with the Clerk of the LSPC. Peter will also attempt to liaise with CDC to ensure there isn't a duplication of approach and to be notified of any last minute submissions by the appellant.
- 041223/7 Cllr Cook then put forward proposals to deal with pressing issues of governance. He explained that some of the current Standing Orders are too rigorous, impeded the PC and should be reviewed to bring them inline with current practises.
- He explained we needed to update the role of the Transition Working Group. This would become the Finance and Governance Advisory Committee and Peter Watson would be added as a fourth member. Cllr. Cook explained further that the current naming of the sub-committees is confusing. They were originally established to be advisory to the PC and not decision making and should be renamed as such. The PC will take advice from committees but not delegate powers of decision making to them. They would be renamed accordingly.
- Cllr Cook explained that the current Financial Procedures budget setting is restrictive and needs adapting from "the budget will be based on year end reserves equaling the average of the past five year's expenditure" to "the budget will be based on sustaining a reasonable level of reserves for contingencies with a target range of no less than 25%, or more than 100%, of ongoing annual expenditure".
- Cllr. Cook then spoke on the recruitment of a Clerk. This derived from the June '23 WRPC meeting where the Chair felt a professional Clerk was required to guide the PC through the issues facing it and the PC resolves to recruit on the same job specification as the previous Clerk but had not been successful. The PC therefore required a greater degree of flexibility. This would allow the PC to widen the scope and allow it to solve the issue in a

number of different ways. The PC also needed the authority to implement this as soon as possible.

A member of the public asked if the PC was still of the view that a paid Clerk was required. Cllr Cook said he would answer this when the budget was discussed later in the meeting.

Cllr Cook then explained that by dealing with these matters in the manner proposed, he could not guarantee that every issue has been covered but this resolution would take precedent unless any legal matters prevent it

The PC passed the motion dealing with these proposals with all in favour.

041223/8 The Clerk summarised a report emailed by Cllr Maclean in his absence. His report is uploaded onto the website.

041223/10 Peter Watson updated the PC on the the planning advisory being given on a remit all planning matters together with a wider remit for example the local plan. It must also consider matters beyond the parish for example the current Grafter's appeal in the neighbouring parish. The committee can respond quickly for the Clerk, whilst PC meetings may not always fit in with a planning timetable.

A member of the public asked if this would not exclude the requirement for PC EGM's re pressing planning issues. Cllr. Cook said that this was an important issue which was being given careful consideration, the Gilders Applications having been specifically dealt with at the recent EGM.

Another member of the public described a current issue they were having with the ongoing renovation of their residence. They were awaiting a decision from the CDC conservation officer before commencing any further work and were frustrated by the delay. Cllr Cook asked they write to the Clerk, detailing their issue. This would then be considered by Cllr. Cook and Peter Watson.

04/0123/11 Elizabeth Ransom then updated the PC on the Green repair Working Party. There had been considerable further deterioration of the green caused by cars parking on the green at the start of the footpath, but despite attempts, the Party had found it difficult to engage any contractors with estimates of costs. All possible solutions had been considered, ranging from, but not exclusively, a ban on parking to the creation of a more substantial parking area. These solutions create further tensions - banning parking may well result in cars parking elsewhere to the detriment of nearby residents. Improving the parking area may simply encourage more cars to park.

In the near term, Paul Phipps had kindly agreed to level the heavily rutted area and do what he can to fill in. (This has subsequently been confirmed) Elizabeth also suggested that some of the 'No Parking' signs that are present in other areas of the green should be relocated and placed near the damaged area to try and prevent cars encroaching further on the green.

Elizabeth referred back to the PC to find longer term solutions. She felt that the PC could approach contractors with greater authority and could also approach the Secretary of State for approval if required. She raised the question of funding, namely is it down to the village or is it possible to raise external funding? Returning to the subject of costings, using plastic mesh only, one estimate was in the region of £1000, whilst if the area was to be excavated and reinforced the costs would rise to £3000 plus.

Elizabeth concluded by suggesting the PC need to reflect - are they looking for a temporary solution or wish to embark on a a permanent one and seek official permission?

Cllr. Montague asked if the village was against using posts to try and contain the parking? A member of the public replied that some villagers were against this solution.

Cllr Cook suggested we see what impact the repair work by Paul Phipps makes and then reevaluate in order to make a more informed decision on any further long-term solution

It was agreed to go ahead with these as quickly as possible ,bearing in mind that The PC has a legal responsibility to maintain and conserve the Village Green.—

041223/13

Cllr Finnemore briefed the PC on the budget for the forthcoming year. The current year end shows a closing position of c£5000. Cllr Finnemore explained that for the 24/25 year, a number of additional expenses were expected and needed to be included in the budget. Having decided to move away from the 5 year average expenditure for a figure for year end reserves, Cllr Finnemore stated he had been able to manage the impact on the precept and should result in a level of reserves of £3000 at the 24/25 year end.

Cllr. Cook explained that Cllr. Finnemore had had a difficult job in lowering reserves while budgeting for significant expenditure and there had to be a judgement at the level of precept. versus the expenditure commitments. The previous 5 year average would have resulted in a reserve of £9000 which was never acceptable. Cllr Cook had benchmarked the proposed precept. He'd analysed Bourton and Cotswold District for D rated properties. Cotswold District D properties had a precept of £95.84, which after a 5% uplift came to £100. Bourton D properties were £103.30 and were rising to £110. Cllr Finnemore was proposing a precept of £77.59 and Cllr. Cook thought that was well judged. Cllr Cook also felt it both unwise and unsafe to deplete the reserves further in light of other contingencies.

Cllr Montague observed that the precept waiver in 22/23 year had effectively been a one-off which parishioners had had the benefit of and going forward the reserves would be at a sensible level.

Cllr. Ponti pointed out the budget assumes the PC is hiring a Clerk. Cllr Cook explained that if is not the option pursued (see above) , the the result will be that the reserves will rebuild more rapidly to an appropriate level.

Cllr Ponti asked if the PC needed a computer for use by the Clerk. Cllr Finnemore explained that it was currently challenging to transfer data when there was change of Clerk. There wasn't currently a budget for computer but it could be considered when the position is clarified and could then be in the contingency.

Cllr. Finnemore reiterated that if there turned out to be savings within the budget the precept will be reassessed for the following year.

A member of the public thought it an over generous budget. Cllr Finnemore explained that there were a number of exceptional items that needed to be budgeted for and gave the examples of the pond maintenance, triennial tree survey plus the requirement to prune the lower branches of a number of trees to aid the annual cut. The member of the public thought the budget was over estimating expenditure it would be possible to reduce the expenditure by £2000 and consequently lower the precept. Cllr. Cook stated he was happy with the idea of restoring the reserves and that this was reflected in the precepts. He explained that

there were a number of duties that had to be fulfilled and at this stage the budget could not reflect the reliance on volunteers.

Cllr. Montague had to leave for a prior engagement at 7.16pm

041223/9 Cllr. Cook briefed the PC on the findings of the Water sub-committee. He explained that he had been in touch with GCC and they had been very responsive and reassigned in a matter of weeks. He further explained that GCC have a statutory responsibility for flood risk management. Cllr. Cook had also been able to speak to nearly all the residents affected. Lawrence King (CDC Flood Risk Manager) had kept in touch with GCC during the period since their last engagement and all were fully aware of the situation. Cllr Cook had discussed funding with Mr. King. Mr King advised to let GCC come forward with a feasibility study and to make decisions at that point as to who would contribute. Cllr. Cook had subsequently met Mr. Baker on site with his preferred modellers and it was established they would look only at the central village and the village green. It was hoped the modelling would be completed in 3 weeks but that was 7 weeks ago. Cllr. Cook had briefed the Water Committee but no more could be done until GCC revert. Cllr. Cook received an email from Mr Baker (4.12.23) who explained "We are still very much committed to delivering the work, however this particular year we have delivered so much in the way of project development and delivery that our forecast is looking like we will unfortunately have to delay until the new financial year." CDC also remain very supportive. In light of this Cllr Cook was optimistic that GCC would put forward possible solutions in the new financial year.

041223/12 Cllr Gorton updated the PC on the management of the Green and Ponds. He explained that, following advice from the EA, the water primrose had been hand cleared from the large pond in the summer and left to compost on dry land at the rear of the pond. He had subsequently met on site with the Anita Appleby, Biodiversity Technical Officer from the EA on 22.11.23., who suggested engaging an approved contractor to spray any emerging water primrose in the spring. She suggested multiple visits from the contractor, perhaps over a number of years, until the primrose was eradicated. Ms. Appleby said although she could not recommend, she would forward details of contractors who may do this work. As water primrose is also present in a pond in Bourton, it was discussed that there may be a possibility of using the same contractor with possible cost savings. Ms.Appleby pointed out a native plant (Brooklime) which has a very similar leaf structure to Water Primrose and how easy it was to confuse the two, as she herself did on initial observations of the pond. She also inspected the small catchment pond at the base of Olive Hill and did not find any further water primrose. She recommended that this pond is dredged to deepen the pond. She felt if this action was undertaken, then the pond would fill with sediment and cease to exist.

Following questions, Cllr Gorton said one option was to continue to hand pick to see if the primrose could be eradicated without recourse to spraying. It was agreed that contractors would be contacted and costs obtained.

041223/07 Peter Watson referred back to the Planning Advisory Committee and its proposed terms of reference to advise on all matters relating to Planning Applications. He asked that this proposal was confirmed by the PC, which it duly was unanimously.

Cllr Ponti asked if the Water Advisory Committee would be taking the same terms of reference as the Planning Advisory Committee. Cllr Cook said that would be considered if necessary once GCC recommenced work.

041223/14 The dates of the next meetings would be 4th March 2024 and 27th May 2024

Meeting ended 7.27pm

