**M I N U T E S**

**Of Witham Friary Parish Council**

**Held on Tuesday 8th November 2022 at Witham Friary Village Hall**

**Present:** Chair W Sheppard, Cllrs J Knowles, M Ferrari, L Sewell, F Nicholls

**Also Present:** J Gregory Proper Officer, plus 2 members of the public

The public session raised issues with Private Road (verge cutting and speeding) and a grant application was submitted for the churchyard. Council felt that Private Road would be monitored given the comments regarding safety and the grant application could be considered later in the meeting with the Clerk passing around the information.

**11.22/23.01 Appointment of Councillor**

Within the public session applicants in attendance (1, Sid Coate) gave a brief of his application and asked Council what was expected of him should he get the position.

The Chair advised that a decision on co-option would take place at the end of the meeting in a confidential session.

**11.22/23.02 Apologies for absence**

District Councillor Gay and County Councillor Clarke had given apologies for non attendance. Cllr Gay had ongoing driving issues and Cllr Clarke had a meeting clash

**11.22/23.03 Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to advise any Declarations of interest in today’s agenda items or any pecuniary interests in line with Councils’ Code of Conduct.

**Resolved: It was noted that no declarations, pecuniary or otherwise were received.**

**11.22/23.03 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

To receive the minutes of the meeting held 11th October 2022.

**Resolved: To be signed by the Chair as a correct record at the next meeting with the appropriate amendment.**

**11.22/23.04 Matters Arising**

Cllr Knowles clarified from the previous meeting that an Emergency Village Plan was in draft and that a Village plan needed writing.

**11.22/23.05 Planning Applications**

Cllr Ferrari had stated that she had booked a place on the Planning Board scheduled to discuss Bindon Lane. She would be looking at the opinions submitted from the electorate to get a overall feel of those for the application and those against. Cllr Nicholls stated that there had been letters from Strap Lane residents objecting to the development.

**11.22/23.06 Finance**

To present current financial statement and balance on accounts – Balance on accounts showing as £34151.62. It was agreed for the bank reconciliation to be posted on the website.

To agree schedule of payments as indicated below:

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R**esolved: Payment schedule for November was approved – in addition the Grant application from George Pritchard on behalf of the church was circulated and agreed on the proviso that in line with the application requirements a report of spending and receipts is provided.**

The in-year budget was considered along with spending plans for 23/24. Whilst some initial Councillor statements called for no increase in precept with the amount of reserves, the clerk argued that with inflation, increasing costs it would be better to consider smaller increments than not doing anything for several years and then hitting the electorate with a huge increase. Discussions were had over the legal fee costs, pavilion requirement, snow provision, dovecote and play park. It was agreed that more would be known next month for the Dovecote so the budget could be rehashed ready for the precept request.

**11.22/23.07 Reports**

1. **To receive Chairman’s Report**

Cllr Sheppard said that the open meeting by the Forest of Selwood regarding Long Ham went well. He felt the group quashed certain rumours, were engaging and open with their ideas. It seemed the most contentious issue was the fencing of the footpath for which there were those supportive and against it. We firstly must appreciate that it is a private land purchase and their concern with dogs off leads would be contamination of feed, worrying of other animals and disturbing ground nesting birds. Cllr Sewell said that a bench or seat where the path opened up overlooking the ponds would be a nice addition from the Council at some point.

1. **Cllr Nicholls report on Highways**

Cllr Nicholls said that Holt Road/Private road had become a race track with lots of vehicles. There was no immediate solution to this problem however. Drains in the vicinity was a concern with winter weather approaching and the fact they were clogged with leaves. It was suggested that we provide our own contractor for such events who can be called upon to maintain.

**Resolved: £200 for the next 3 months to provide some drain maintenance.**

**Action: Cllr Sewell to survey and plot what drains needed action. Cllr Sheppard to look at contractors.**

1. **To receive Cllr Ferrari report on Communications**

Cllr Ferrari stated there was nothing to report. The Clerk had started work with Netwise in setting up the website who were currently doing some behind the scenes work with general information and client portals.

1. **To receive Cllr Sheppard report on the Recreation Ground**

Cllr Knowles reported that the timer had been given to Cllr Sheppard to look at who indicated that the lights were on at 4.15pm. Cllr Sheppard stated that the football and cricket had gained some momentum with discussing requirements for a pavilion. Obviously in an initial stage but pleased to see signs of growth. The perimeter fence with the Emery’s needed replacement. The Chair suggested he price the materials, with perhaps volunteers helping with the labour of erecting it.

**Resolved: Chair to price up fencing, approach Conkers for labour.**

There was discussion over the agreements and needing consistency between the two sports. It was agreed that the Cricket agreement be reviewed to cover a “break cause” and come back at the next meeting with ideas.

1. **To receive Cllr Knowles report on the Play Patch**

Cllr Knowles had nothing further to report. It was suggested from budget purposes to perhaps consider replacement of equipment on a piece-meal year by year basis. The only item not addressed as a concern by the ROSPA report is the large poles which have cracked. However this is being addressed shortly.

1. **To receive Cllr Sewell report on Footpaths**

Cllr Sewell revisited the wire cutting and with the MDC noting the gate was in the wrong place. Cllr Sewell had made a sign just to ensure the awareness for walkers to know the position of the gate. Chicken wire had been placed across the slippery bridge with no handrails to help with grip. With regard to the permissive path at 42 acres / black arabian stud Cllr Sewell had spoken to MDC Pathways who were of the understanding this would be a permanent path however if that isn’t the case then the landowner would be met to discuss by MDC.

1. **To receive Cllr Ferrari report on Churchyard**

Cllr Ferrari said there was nothing to report. A member of the public said there had been 3 cuts since September and it was agreed that the graveyard was looking better. The financial situation of the PCC was also stressed to the Council regarding the grant and request.

**11.22/23.08 Network Rail**

Cllr Ferrari had contacted Network Rail as there was a “waterfall” at the railway bridge. An engineer had been out and a report was awaited.

**11.22/23.09 Witham Water**

Cllr Sheppard had produced a draft leaflet regarding the past, current and future of Witham Friary. It was very detailed. The clerk with a critical eye said for the final version perhaps consider the purpose of the leaflet, and whether the leaflet is engaging enough.

The current issue with blue water was discussed and Cllr Knowles would make representations in this regard.

**Action: Cllr Knowles to make contact with WW. Cllrs Sheppard, Ferrari and Sewell to look at leaflet content.**

**11.22/23.10 Distgen**

Cllr Ferrari reported that Wanstrow were in favour of opportunities with a wind turbine. She stated that the Operations Director Darren Potter was happy to arrange a public meeting so would look further into that.

**Other Council business**

**Dovecote**

There was some progression but mindful of time Councillors said there would be some legal fees involved.

**11.22/23.11 Any other Business**

**11.22/23.12 Date of next meeting**

13th December 2022 – 7.30pm at Witham Village Hall.

**11.22/23.13 Confidential Session**

The applications for the casual vacancy was considered and a vote was made with the Council voting unanimously for Sid Coate.

Meeting closed at 9.40pm

A signed copy of the minutes can be viewed by arrangement via the Parish Clerk.