**M I N U T E S**

**Of Witham Friary Parish Council**

**Held on Tuesday 13th December at Witham Friary Village Hall**

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

**Also Present:** County Councillor B Clarke,J Gregory Proper Officer, plus 2 members of the public

The public session raised issues with the overgrown path around the playing field and a grit bin provision for Holt Barton area.

County Councillor Clarke raised issues talked about at County level this included the withdraw of bus services in some areas. A revamp of the Castle Cary railway station car park to provide better access. Continuation of the Council tax reduction scheme for those living alone or caring but a change to empty properties where there will be 200% supplement if empty for 5 years this is to encourage houses back into the rental market. The County council are also issuing grants to help with the cost of living and have a fund of 3.8 million. The postal voting system is set to change and Taunton will have the first affected election. There is a boundary review affecting members of parliament and proposals are being sought on names of the various areas. The new Unitary will start its inception with 34 million over budget increasing over time and then back to 36 million in 2026 as a worse case scenario although there is not a lot of optimism for anything more positive. LCN’s have a 1st April deadline for boundary and name. It is difficult to determine what they should be and no-one knows what is happening in this regard.

**12.22/23.01 Apologies for absence**

District Councillor Gay and County Councillor Ham had given apologies for non attendance. All Parish Councillors were present.

**12.22/23.02 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.**

**12.22/23.03 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

To receive the minutes of the meeting held 8th November 2022

**Resolved: Approval given by Council and signed by the Chair in the presence of the meeting.**

**12.22/23.04 Matters Arising**

None raised.

**12.22/23.05 Planning Applications**

Bindon Lane had their planning Board of which Cllr Ferrari attended. She advised the planning board refused the application. It was likely there would be an appeal or brand new application. Concerns were expressed that the applicant had not submitted essential documentation and this had been requested for some 18 months. The Planning Officer suggested the applicant reduce the business footprint however this would impact some major ecology surveys not least a citadel of badger sets along its perimeter. Access was also an issue without cutting through next door. It was also felt that the temporary mobile home would become a permanent house in a short time of 3 years. It was felt that the process wasn’t duly followed and Cllr Ferrari suggested raising concerns to Mendip. C.Cllr Clarke said this would need to go to the Monitoring Officer.

**Resolved: It was agreed to raise our concerns with Cllr Ferrari to circulating a draft letter to all Council before sending.**

There was a further application albeit changes were difficult to note for Foxes Farm.

**Resolved; As previously agreed this would be left to the Planners for their decision.**

**12.22/23.06 Finance**

To present current financial statement and balance on accounts – Balance on accounts as at 30.11.22 showing as £32093.31. It was agreed for the bank reconciliation to be posted on the website.

To agree schedule of payments as indicated below:

Graphical user interface, text, application, email

Description automatically generated

R**esolved: Payment schedule for December was approved**

The Precept request was considered this would be a £299 rise for the whole parish taking the total to £10274

**Resolved: Precept Request for £10274 to be submitted to MDC ahead of the 20th January deadline**

To consider any changes to the Bank Mandate

**Resolved: Council agreed the removal of Hugo Brooke and replacement with Cllr Sheppard**

**12.22/23.07 Reports**

1. **To receive Chairman’s Report**

Nothing to specifically report however there would be input on the various reports to follow.

1. **Cllr Nicholls report on Highways**

Cllr Nicholls said that the school bus was stranded and the bus had no towing eye so had to wait for the grit to take affect. He noted no new grit had been delivered by SCC. There was issues by Marcus Powells yard entrance with water from the field making the road a complete sheet of ice.

**Action: Clerk to chase SCC for grit delivery and write to the landowner regarding the water spill (Dr Gregor)**

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

Cllr Ferrari stated there was nothing to report. Cllr Sewell had started work on the Facebook site. The Clerk had started work on the website but needed photos to progress. Cllr Ferrari said she had spoken to Flora who agreed to take some pictures.

**Action: Clerk to advise Cllr Ferrari on the picture requirement /size**

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

The Chair noted comments as part of public participation and it was agreed for the Clerk to address with Grass Valet.

It was stated that he had received comments on the car parking when football was on. He had verbally spoken to the football team but it was felt that if there was around 22 cars this should be easily managed in that area

**Action: Clerk to address footpath overgrowth with Grass Valet. Chair to monitor and address**

There was discussion getting the agreement for the Football Club in place.

The Chair had a quote for fencing as noted in the last minutes of circa 1.3k a further quotation would be sought.

**Resolved: Clerk to use the Cricket template and draft up.**

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

Cllr Knowles stated that one piece of equipment had to be masked off. Mike White who had done some repairs had not shown any keenness in doing anything more. As Cllr Coate was practical he would assist / support Cllr Knowles in this area as to what action could be taken.

**Action: Cllrs Knowles and Coate to explore repair possibilities**

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

Nothing to report

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

Nothing to report and agreed that the item should be removed from the agenda.

**12.22/23.08 Network Rail**

Nothing to report although contact would be made as their appeared to be a break in at the yard.

**12.22/23.09 Witham Water**

The leaflet for the village had been circulated. Cllr Nicholls provided some amendment. This would now be sent to WW for comment and amendment if necessary. Cllr Knowles had circulated an email from Seb regarding communication possibilities that WW were looking at.

**Action: Cllr Ferrari to seek comment from WW.**

**12.22/23.10 Distgen**

The chair was attending a webinar on the future possibilities of wind turbines.

**Other Council business**

**Dovecote**

Graham McCarthy was giving some legal advice free of charge on the matter. We currently have a (Full repairing) lease from the PCC and then there was an under-lease to Roger. He suggested he would draft a Deed of Surrender to allow Roger to step out from the Lease and then with the agreement of the PCC replace this with a Licence to Occupy as there was a number of parties looking to use the space.

With regard to the full-repairing element of the lease GM suggested some consensual agreement that the repairs already undertaken had placed the building in a better state of repair than when it was originally leased.

There were questions around insurance, surveys, costs and ongoing maintenance which would be discussed fully once a response had been received to Cllr Ferrari’s letter setting out the intentional use to the PCC – once this is agreed then we can move forward with the other aspects.

Thanks expressed to Cllr Ferrari for her waste disposal work!

**11.22/23.11 Any other Business**

None

**11.22/23.12 Date of next meeting**

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

Meeting closed at 9.15pm

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