**M I N U T E S**

**Of Witham Friary Parish Council**

**Held on Tuesday 14th February 2023 at Witham Friary Village Hall**

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

**Also Present:** County Councillor Clarke, J Gregory Proper Officer plus 3 members of the public

Public Consultation

Matters raised included Long Ham and impact on flooding

Coronation plans and funding request including Coronation breakfast

Highways

County Councillor Clarke gave a brief of matters affecting the Parish which included the LCN link up with Frome, the overspend at Somerset County Council and the request for Highway repairs (covered separately under Highways report). He also reported on grants available for heating, and help with the cost of living. There were also changes regarding the objectors time at planning boards which was reduced to 3 minutes per objector had now been increased to 15 minutes in total.

**02.22/23.01 Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from County Councillor Ham

 **Noted: All parish Councillors in attendance.**

**02.22/23.02 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.**

**02.22/23.03 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

To receive the minutes of the meeting held 10th January 2023

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

**02.22/23.04 Matters Arising**

None raised.

**02.22/23.05 Planning Applications**

Cllr Ferrari stated there was nothing further on Bindon Lane.

**02.22/23.06 Finance**

 To present current financial statement and balance on accounts – Balance on accounts showing as £32147.88 as at 31.01.23

 To agree schedule of payments as indicated below:

 

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

 Bank Mandate - Signatures were supplied by existing signatories, Cllr Knowles and Nicholls with the addition of Cllr Sheppard for changes to the mandate.

**02.22/23.07 Reports**

1. **To receive Chairman’s Report**

Made suggestions for a lengthsman role, verges attendee and winter warden to back fill some of the elements not covered by Highways and in light of recent cold weather. It was agreed a subcommittee of the Chair, Cllr Nicholls and Sewell along with the Clerk look at this possibility and if needed to open business accounts with suppliers. Cllr Nicholls gave some alarming ball-part costs to winter gritting which financially may not be viable to contract out. In relation to gritting it was questioned whether the school bus routes are covered. The clerk would question this with District Cllr Gay.

**Resolved: Sub-committee given delegated powers to progress with a view to starting the Lengthsman position in April**

**Action: School bus routes questioned for gritting.**

1. **Cllr Nicholls report on Highways**

County Councillor Ham had requested all his designated parishes to make an extensive list of issues, from dirty signs, potholes, overgrown verges etc by the end of the month as he was meeting Sara Davis at Traffic

**Resolved: Cllr Nicholls, Sewell to progress with other councillors feeding in.**

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

Cllr Ferrari stated that the phone box needed attention. It was in working order. To progress this she intended to investigate its usage with BT then consider decommissioning, and repainting etc.

**Resolved: Cllr Ferrari to progress investigations and report back**

The clerk reported that the website was well underway and envisaged a launch date of 1st March once the bio’s had been uploaded. There was some tweaking necessary to some of the tabbed heading to make them more relevant to their content. The Clerk questioned the Village Website as the Council were paying for the domain. The Parish Council wished to record its grateful thanks to Colin Horstmann for his outstanding efforts in installing and maintaining such.

**Resolved: Domain cost for the village website not to be renewed.**

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

Work had been started to the perimeter track although members could not establish whether this had been completed. There was an area at the start of the track untouched and needed addressing

Witham Cricket Club were replacing the nets and digging the top soil to provide a synthetic surface for practice.

The contract needed reviewing and it was established it was 1 cut a week between March and October amounting to 27 cuts per season, with any extra cuts paid for by Cricket or Football although WF Youth FC had offered to cut as needed. Any contract would need to cover maintenance of the perimeter track and its surface twice a year. The Clerk advised that Idverde had been contacted and response awaited

The Chair had met with a resident regarding ongoing issues with the pavilion although should be correct to changing facility, however this building would be erected at the far end of the playing field. Currently cricket and football were exploring funding opportunity and would report further at an appropriate time. Tom Hyde had some longer term plans for the wicket in replacing this with an artificial surface.

The Clerk had advised that the Football Club agreement had been signed by the Football club representatives and would be countersigned tonight on behalf of the Parish Council and copies circulated to both parties.

Parking issues remained however a solution had been sought to more the lights and cut the hedge back approx. 1m which would allow extra car parking

Two quotes had been received for the fence along the Emery property

Read Agri £1773 and Boxford £1978. The Conker Committee had offered their labour in return for refreshments. Questions were raised in terms of quality and in response there was not much difference in specification.

The Chair suggested an “information board” for the car park. Maiden Bradley had a similar illustrated Perspex information board. Vicky Sheppard had offered her services in drawing something up

**Action: Start of perimeter track needed addressing**

 **Football Club agreement to be signed and circulated to parties**

 **Parking issues deferred to lengthsman role**

**Resolved: Read Agri quotation agreed along with refreshment costs for the Conker Committee**

 **Vicky Sheppard engaged for information board illustration purposes**

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

A meeting had been sourced with a play patch company and the safety report was considered with them. Problems causing by strimming, non use of metal ground inserts and pole covers had meant the elements had taken its toll. The latest equipment was in a worse state than thought and even worse than some of the older 2004 equipment. It was hoped that repairs would return it to a state where we don’t get further safety comments however this is not to be the case. It was suggested that a rolling programme of renewals, the larger item need for replacement would be in the region of £1200-£1500. For budgeting purposes the clerk requested costs and timescales so that this can be properly accounted for and precept figures adjusted where necessary. Given Graham McCauley is not charging for his services an appropriate thank you would be purchased

**Action: Cllrs Knowles and Coate to provide costings and timeframe. Gift to be sourced for legal work provided.**

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

The Lost Footpath Group would be meeting Wednesday. A footpaths book had been produced and would be sold to the general public at cost.

1. **To receive Cllr Ferrari / Sewell report on Biodiversity**

To record Long West farm had been purchased by Heal Rewilding.

1. **To receive Cllr Ferrari Report on Distgen**

Nothing further to report

1. **To receive Cllr Knowles/Ferrari report on the Dovecote**

Graham McCauley had been engaged and the Deed of Surrender had been emailed to Roger Barnes and the next documentation was being prepared relating to Heads of Terms. A Heritage Surveyor had given some informal advice about work that was needed and quotes are to be sought along with the need for grant applications if necessary. The Chair, although realising there was a commitment with the lease arrangement felt it prudent for a survey to look at the overall condition and needs of the building. He questioned what rent had been decided and/or the expectations of the interested tenants – of which negotiations had not taken place. For financial reasons we needed to understand what the long term financial commitment was. This was echoed by the Clerk/RFO given the age of the building and its specific needs. Cllr Ferrari stated that a more formal offer of Survey could be sourced.

**Action: To source a formal survey of the building**

**02.22/23.08 Network Rail**

Nothing to report.

**02.22/23.09 Witham Water**

The leaflet had received input from Seb at WW. There were works and further plans underway for improvements to the infrastructure and to improve efficiency. The idea was for WW to run more independently from the Estate with a Communications Officer, and Maintenance Officer in post along with Seb as Managing Director. It was stressed that the communications officers in the village would be a huge asset to improvements being made.

**02.22/23.10 Other business referred to the Clerk**

A pupil of All Hallows had sent a letter on how we can help save the hedgehogs, an appropriate response would be made asking if he could design a poster for the village noticeboards.

Policies: The annual review of policies was provided not least Financial Regulations needed some text updates to deal with the move to Unity Bank

**Action: Amendments suggested to Model Publication scheme dates**

 **Title of the Health and Safety document.**

**02.22/23.11 Any other Business**

 None

**11.22/23.12 Date of next meeting**

 14th March 2023 – Cllrs Sewell and Ferrari gave apologies

Meeting closed at 9.50pm

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