**M I N U T E S**

**Of Witham Friary Parish Council**

**Held on Tuesday 8th August at Witham Friary Village Hall 7.30pm**

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

**Also Present: Somerset Councillor B Clarke,** J Gregory Proper Officer, plus 8 members of the public

**Public Participation**

Points raised:

* Bindon Lane – Planning application. Issues raised included not limited to: not sustainable, former agricultural land/no services, concerns for nature and biodiversity, heavy build footprint unwelcome, travel of those using and pollution levels, feed lorries accessing site, floodlighting, major discrepancies between documents, questionability of need for a dwelling, earthworks and excavation needed, sloping nature of site, excess water and run off, acreage per horse, business case does not add up, and perhaps a charade to build a substantial dwelling.
* Bier – to measure at widest point when it is to be moved to go through the door of Dovecote.

**08.23/24.01 Apologies for absence**

Cllr Coate had a prior family engagement and gave apologies.

**Resolved: Given the circumstances dispensation was granted.**

**08.23/24.02 Declarations of interest**

Councillors were asked to declare any interests pecuniary or in the meeting this evening.

 **Resolved: No Declarations received.**

**08.23/24.03 Minutes of the previous meeting held**

To agree minutes from the previous meeting held on 11th July 2023

**Resolved: agreed with an amendment to the “Trail” noting this had not been replaced just dismantled. Copies of minutes were signed in the presence of the meeting.**

**08.23/24.04 Planning Applications for consideration**

Cllr Ferrari gave an update on the Bindon Lane Equestrian Centre and echoed thoughts of the public with their concerns. She had prepared an extensive document in refute of the application which the meeting agreed. It was noted that there would be an inquiry in September with an application for amendment in October. She would be attending the inquiry.

 **Action: Cllr Ferrari to submit on behalf of the Council and attend any necessary meetings.**

**08.23/24.05 Finance**

1. To receive financial statement

Cashbook figure at the end of July was £33896.37 with payments received from the Conker club and Distgen.

Invoices had been sent to WFCC regarding extra cuts which they have queried stating whether it was payment for half when an extra cut was made. The Clerk was instructed to look at the Agreement but they had paid for full cuts previously without complaint and members considered that they felt it had always been payment for any additional

1. To agree schedule of payments as indicated below

J Gregory Clerk Salary £ 279.96

ROSPA Inspection Survey £ 180.00 Due 02.09

Ecclesiastical Insurance Dovecote insurance Awaited Due 24.08

The Clerk reported a hitch with the insurance as quotations would not be supplied to non-church groups however this was been pursued.

 **Resolved: The above payment schedule was agreed**

 3. The Clerk stated that next month it would be good to start to plan budgets for precept requirements. This would allow a couple of meetings back and forth just to get the figures. Members were asked to consider costs for the next year and it would be an idea to have a clear picture of costs involved in the Dovecote.

**08.23.24.07 Reports**

1. **To receive County Councillor B Clarke’s report**

Items of note included the financial deficit at Somerset Council of 28 million. Development subject to phosphate levels had been released for construction. Sites for 505 homes were being earmarked for development in the north (this area of the county).

1. **Chairman’s Report**

Weather extremes had been brought to his attention by residents:

The downpour of rain had produced floodwater which had flooded the bridge, gravel was flowing out of the yard owned by Network rail.

**Action: Cllr Ferrari to liaise with Network Rail for ways to eleviate the problem and atleast prevent grit flowing to lower ground and blocking drains.**

The grass on the Heal Rewilding land was causing concern if we had dry weather. It is long and a fire risk. Homeowners whose properties back onto this land requested a fire break to reduce risk.

**Action: Cllr Ferrari and Sewell would look at an initial informal approach given their links to Heal**

1. **Cllr Nicholls report on Highways**

Thanks expressed to Highways for the verge cutting near Private Road. There was another area however it was known to be private land.

**Action: Lengthsman to offer cutting in liaison with landowner.**

The fencing on the double bends had been reported and allocated a reference – action was awaited.

1. **To receive report on Communications**

The abandoned car in the car park was due to be disposed of after Friday this week.

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

The ROSPA report had been received with inspectors noting that the track around the outside was decaying slightly and edging needed addressing

**Action: Chair to address situation with the Conker Group**

New “dog” signage had been noted as installed. Thanks expressed to Cllr Coate for his efforts.

The football club had removed the majority of their equipment however there was sand and cement left. Due to the area being cleared this allowed the cricket covers to be tucked in.

**Action: Chair to ask football club if they wanted to collect remainder of items**.

Fencing along the Emery property had been delayed as they may wish to cut the long grass. Installation greatly hinged on the weather going forward. Costs and agreement had already been granted.

Little progress due to work had been made on expanding the perimeter path and the barriers. Bunting would need coming down and this was the opportunity to remove the old lights as Mark Norris Electrical had advised these were not connected. This was dependent on fixings and how easy this would be.

**Action: Chairman and others using Cherry picker to remove bunting/elec. poles. Perimeter path and barrier ongoing**

After discussion on the state of the metal bars accessing both the Recreation ground and play patch it was agreed for the lengthsman to attend to the flaky paint and repaint.

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

Cllr Knowles had circulated the ROSPA report on the play patch. The new nest swing was reported as too low and a correction was being made. Risk levels above 5 were matters we should take seriously. The multiple device with the swing and walkways came in at risk level 8. A local carpenter had been approached and the lengthsman was requested to take a look. The play patch company indicated that replacement bit by bit would be more expensive than buying new. Cost of new circa 4k.

The Chair advised that he had recently replaced the padlock with a combination lock.

Grasscutting of the play patch was considered. There had been offers by a young person however this created some issues in terms of employment, health and safety and supervision needs. The best solution would be for the lengthsman to include this in his programme of work. For the time being the Chair would arrange a cut of the play patch during t

**Resolved: For lengthsman to pick up within his work programme**

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

Cllr Sewell reported lots of overgrown and blocked footpaths which can be reported on a system called “roam”. There had not been a meeting of the footpath group as yet but they would be considering a working party to address some of the footpath issues.

It was suggested that within Heal Rewilding that a mowing strip from behind new Friary to Moorleaze be created

**Action: Cllr Sewell to address informally with Heal given her links**

1. **Network Rail**

Nothing to report.

1. **Biodiversity**

Cllr Sewell reported on a resource known as Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) it was a system to provide a record of flora and fauna of a particular area and would have been useful in the event of planning siting Bindon Lane as an example. The cost was £60 – it was unknown if this was per search or an annual membership.

**Resolved: Cost to be investigated and agreed for £60 if annually**

**08.23/24.08 Witham Water**

Nothing of note reported.

**08.23/24.09 Dovecote**

Cllr Coate was in the process of obtaining some quotations however not in attendance to provide an update. As stated earlier by the Clerk budget planning was essential from September to look at spends for the following year. However some routine maintenance could be added to the lengthsman’s work programme. It was noted that this is likely to be in excess of his agreed hours so an estimate of time was needed. It was repored that a number of general issues had been addressed.

**Action: quotation for number of hours and work to be provided. List of actions taken on the Dovecote to date to be provided**

Cllr Ferrari was tasked from the last meeting to look at the rental however the solicitor had pointed out a clause in the agreement as follows:

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Therefore she stated that it cannot be used for a commercial venture. The Licence fee would cover routine maintenance, insurance, electric, wifi and perhaps a contribution towards some other costs. No rateable value was given to the property so this was not an issue.

**08.23/24.10 Matters referred to the meeting / Clerk**

 None

**08.23/24.11 Dates of Further Meetings**

Next Meeting 12th September 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 8.55pm

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