**M I N U T E S**

**Of Witham Friary Parish Council**

**Held on Tuesday 12th September at Witham Friary Village Hall 7.30pm**

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

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

**Public Participation**

Points raised:

* Village signs – update. Council assumed prices were being obtained and the issue needed Highways to approve. Cllr Ferrari would look at the design again and prices obtained.
* Projector Screen – thanks expressed for paying for the new screen. The proportion of contributions would be discussed as an agenda item further in the meeting.
* Interpretation Board – currently with the Chairs wife in draft format.
* Footpaths – overview of Footpath group given however Somerset were not keen on work being carried out by the group where paths with overgrown and this was either the landowner’s responsibility for clearing paths or by Somerset with brushcutters however we did not meet the amount needed to warrant brushcutters. Further detail regarding path clearing would be done as an agenda item.
* Heel Rewilding – It was stated that they were intending to cut paths for a dog walking area. However this was not a parish council matter
* Cricket – Following a successful season especially with the new U13 team the cricket had the following plans:

1. Due to the pattern of weather with dry springs they wished to gain permission for rainwater harvesting to help with maintaining the cricket square. This would mean bowsers behind the shed, with the shed pulled forward (possibly extending the concrete plinth) then using a pump/generator or ploughed in pipe to get the water to the square.
2. The cricket practice facility was limited to a small number of grass strips. The idea was to replace one with an artificial wicket – this would provide more bounce and consistency for the younger players especially. Grant funding was available.
3. The cricket club had paid in full for the 2nd cuts required to the field however they felt a more cost effective way would be to purchase a mower then they would have control of cutting. Storage during the winter would be required. Cost of 2nd hand mower c£4-5k.
4. The changing facility for the moment was on the back burner

**09.23/24.01 Apologies for absence**

Cllr Coate had a work commitment and Cllr Nicholls felt unwell and apologies were received.

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

**09.23/24.02 Declarations of interest**

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

**Resolved: No Declarations received.**

**09.23/24.03 Minutes of the previous meeting held**

To agree minutes from the previous meeting held on 8th August 2023

**Resolved: Agreed. Copies of minutes were signed in the presence of the meeting.**

**09.23/24.04 Planning Applications for consideration**

The Bindon Lane Inquiry would be held next Tuesday. This may be a full day with site visit.

**Action: Cllr Ferrari would attend on behalf of the Parish Council.**

**09.23/24.05 Finance**

1. To receive financial statement

Cashbook figure at the end of July was £32663. Amounts

1. To agree schedule of payments as indicated below

J Gregory Clerk Salary £ 279.96

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

1. Proportion of Screen was agreed at History Society, WI and Sustainable Witham £35 each

**Action: Clerk to invoice**

1. Budgets

Cllr Coate was looking at costs for main works at the Dovecote.

The Lengthsman is to provide an estimate of hours for smaller maintenance works that he can complete together with a list of works. This would be paid at his hourly rate.

There would be c£5k for play equipment.

Clerk to look at adding small increments to other general items.

The grasscutting situation was being looked into and this would be an initial outlay but will be budgeted at £4.5k

**09.23.24.07 Reports**

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

Not in attendance as we clashed with another parish.

1. **Chairman’s Report**

The Chairman paid tribute to John Hill who recently passed away. John was a long time resident of the village, very knowledgeable on country matters and former member of the Conker Club. Condolences were expressed to his family

John Osborne from Frome Police Station had indicated that villagers should be vigilant to suspicious vehicles in the area in relation to thefts of machinery and hare coursing.

1. **Cllr Nicholls report on Highways**

Cllr Nicholls was not in attendance. He would be asked if he would want to liaise with Highways regarding signage if not Cllr Ferrari would look at the issue.

Not strictly highways but the salt bin replenishment process had changed. Somerset would be sending an inspector initially to report whether the bin was OK, needed filling etc as opposed to the parish advising them.

1. **To receive report on Communications**

Nothing to report.

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

Now that the Emery’s had cut the hay it was hoped that the fence would be replaced in the next couple of week before any break in weather conditions.

The Cricket were informed that they could look into the mower cost.

The perimeter track needed maintenance and this may be done by the new Volunteer Group.

There had been a request via Cllr Coate for Bruton U13s to use the ground for football. After the previous situation with football the matter was discussed in great detail with consideration given to the fact children from the village played for the team, the car park and toileting facilities and what they might contribute to the village.

**Action: Clerk to write and ask for more information and how they will manage with limited facilities and what contribution social and economic benefit there would be to the village.**

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

Nothing further to report. Cllr Knowles was addressing with the providers an issue with the nest swing.

It was reported by the Chair that stinging nettles and longer grass was still evident in the corners.

**Action: Stinging nettles to be remove and lengthsman to be advised**

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

There was two areas where the footpath was inpassable. Following advise from Somerset we are to write to the landowner asking “when” this will be addressed. The two areas were:

Long Ham towards the fishing lake

Hicks Wood close to 42 acres

**Action: Cllr Sewell to provide the Clerk with detailed info and contact information for her to email the request.**

1. **Network Rail**

Nothing to report. The gravel issue had been reported.

1. **Biodiversity**

Nothing to report. It was in the early stages but a volunteer group was being set up.

**09.23/24.08 Witham Water**

Nothing of note reported.

**09.23/24.09 Dovecote**

Cllr Ferrari reported that individuals were keen to move in. Before we agreed to such and enter into a legal agreement there was a number of pressing issues to be addressed such as the cost, fire alarm and possibly a management fee for ringfenced maintenance and a wifi connection.

**Action: Cllr Ferrari to liaise with Cllr Coate on Fire Alarm. Cllr Ferrari would look at costs with Swallow**

**09.23/24.10 Matters referred to the meeting / Clerk**

Heel Rewilding had responded to the fire break request however this wasn’t deemed satisfactory to a number of residents. With the time of year and weather situation not likely to cause an issue this year it was decided not to press the matter. Heel were also in the process of recruiting a Liaison Officer which may improve matters in the interim. It was agreed that next May the matter would be looked at.

There was some confusion in the village generally regarding dog signs on Heel land. However Councillors felt there was no confusion with the circumstances explained.

**08.23/24.11 Dates of Further Meetings**

Next Meeting 17th October – a week later than normal.

As there was band practice again at the hall, the booking requirement would be reiterated as it was difficult to hear each other around the table.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm

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