**M I N U T E S**

**Of Witham Friary Parish Council**

**Held on Tuesday 14th November 2023 at Witham Friary Village Hall 7.30pm**

**Present:** Chair W Sheppard, Cllrs J Knowles, Ferrari, Coate

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

**Public Participation**

**Topics covered**

Background given to the grant application for the pop up café

Water reported affecting residents property from field at Morleaze

Dovecote – prospective licence holders. An appraisee was given of their views and in return the PC gave a status report (detailed later).

**11.23/24.01 Apologies for absence**

Cllr Sewell was on annual leave and Cllr Nicholls was unwell. Somerset Councillor P Ham also apologised.

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

**11.23/24.02 Declarations of interest**

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

**Resolved: No Declarations received.**

**11.23/24.03 Minutes of the previous meeting held**

To agree minutes from the previous meeting held on 17th although the previous Postlebury matter had been included on the agenda. Spelling change from Heel to Heal.

**Resolved: Agreed. Copies of minutes were signed in the presence of the meeting with an amendment advised as above.**

**11.23/24.04 Planning Applications for consideration**

Cllr Ferrari had reported that a rejection had been made to the Bindon Lane Appeal and Costs and the 2nd planning application was withdrawn. There had been some comment about the state of the grounds but there was no planning infringement and little that the PC could do but noted it was “unsightly”.

**11.23/24.05 Finance**

1. To receive financial statement

Cashbook figure at the end of October was £32690.85

1. To agree schedule of payments as indicated below for payment submission 15.11.23

J Gregory Clerk Salary £ 279.96

Village Hall Hire £ 15.00

K Ferrari Dovecote Prop design £ 120.00

Weld Wright Fabrication Dovecote £ 150.00

Sustainable Witham Grant Pop up Café £ 250.00

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

1. Budgets

Budgets were considered in detail looking at an 2nd draft. Quotes had been obtained more works and 19k was a figure for the budget. This should be adjusted as this was over a 5 year period. Play Patch was covered and there was no further expenditure expected. Income from the Dovecote was c£5k with a £10k spend on Dovecote. There would possibly be more lengthsman costs given the Somerset situation. A Final draft and precept request to be included at the next meeting

**11.23.24.07 Reports**

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

Verbal report given on the precarious financial situation at Somerset Council possibly culminating in a Section 114 notice being issued for insolvency. Once this is issued there would be a stop on anything that is not a necessity however precepts were safe. Other than the finances of Somerset Cllr Clarke gave an overview of the new 8-year contract for Highways with Keir, ongoing traffic light replacement, HR changes for “expectant parents” and possible changes to recycling in a bid to save money.

LCN’s were a topic however with a Section 114 pending these would cease.

There are also some boundary changes afoot with this there could be amalgamations sought but to highlight this would not be changes to current parish boundaries. It was seen that amalgamations coupled with the Somerset situation would be a way of pulling resources.

There was a thermal imaging camera available for hire (FREE OF CHARGE) at libraries.

1. **Chairman’s Report**

Three successful events had been held: Apple Day, Conker Competition and Bonfire night. Organisers recognised and applauded for their hard work.

Heal held an Open Meeting for the village, and it was felt they were open to suggestions regarding engagement, better communications and ideas.

There had been a Volunteer Day at Long Ham.

1. **Cllr Nicholls report on Highways**

Cllr Ferrari aided Cllr Nicholls in reporting street lights at Yew Close not working, she was waiting on Highways and a gulley sucker for some drain clearing following a meeting with Network Rail. She suggested the Lengthsman clear some vegetation when available as some debris was causing drains to clog.

Fence on bend near Cllr Sheppard property remained outstanding although a reference number had been provided from Somerset.

1. **To receive report on Communications**

Cllr Ferrari had nothing to report.

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

Fencing (Emery property) remains outstanding and probably a spring job given the current weather situation.

The perimeter track had been completed but recent wet weather had caused a layer of silt to form on part of the track and would possibly need scraping. Situation to be monitored as rain may clear.

Hedges were cut today.

Cllr Sheppard to change the lights.

Nothing further had been received from Bruton U13s

Nothing further had been received in relation to the Basketball hoop.

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

Nothing further, Cllr Knowles felt budget considerations covered any situation.

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

The Estate had cleared their area. Cllr Sheppard’s father had also carried out some remedial works.

1. **Witham Water**

Sign off, size and photos needed from the Estate.

**Action: Clerk to chase**

1. **Biodiversity**

Covered previously 11.23/24.07

**11.23/24.09 Dovecote**

The PC expected the fire alarms to be installed shortly.

The co-working group were keen to trial so with this in mind the following was agreed:

Storage heaters to be switched on to ascertain working condition

Heaters to be sought and installed if needed dependent on above

Chimney sweep booked for advice and compliance

Internet options to be looked at

Licence to be revisited

JK to look out a Router if needed

It was felt that with these actions in place the building would be safe, warm and usable for a trial period and envisage January for a possible trial.

**11.23/24.10 Matters referred to the meeting / Clerk**

Nothing to report.

**11.23/24.11 Dates of Further Meetings**

Next Meeting 12th December 2023 at 7.30pm

Meeting closed at 9.35pm

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