Milton-under-Wychwood Parish Council Meeting

Tuesday 19 December 2023, at 1930

Milton-under-Wychwood Village Hall

Minutes

Present

Vice-Chairman Glynn Allcock (GA)

District Councillor Jeff Haine (JH)

Councillor John Pratt (JP)

Chairman Graham Smith (GS)

Councillor Chris Trotman (CT)

Councillor Pat Ward (PW)

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1. **Apologies for absence**

Councillor Rod Blackman (RB)

Councillor Peter Rawlins (PR)

County Councillor Liz Leffman (LL)

2. **Declaration of Interests**

JH – Planning, Village Hall

3. **Proposal to approve the minutes of the November meeting**

Proposed PW
Seconded JP
All in favour

4. **Matters arising from the November meeting**

No matters raised

5. **Public session for all items related to this Agenda**

No items raised

6. **To receive the following reports:**

6.1 **Chairman's report (GS)**

GS noted that the only item not covered by the agenda is a decision on which bench to have cleaned to test the process. Agreed with CT to look at the one outside the cemetery.

6.2 **District Councillor's report (JH)**
JH reported that the current administration will be dismantling the administrative arrangements managed by Publica and all such arrangements will be taken back in house by the respective participating councils at a one of cost of £1.5M and an extra annual cost of £1.0M pa.

6.3 **County Councillor's report (LL)**
No report available.

7. 2024 budget and precept (JP/CT)
JP summarised the FinCom discussions which produced the budget and rolling plan circulated to councillors before the meeting. All areas of expenditure were reviewed by Fin Com and a view taken as to the likely spend requirement in 2024/5. The balance to be rolled forward at the end of the financial year will be in the region of one year's spend, in line with recommendations as to a prudent amount to roll forward.

On the basis of those discussions, and in the light of the financial challenges some residents of MUW will be facing, FinCom is recommending a precept for 2024/5 of £52,000. This is £2,000 less than the 2023/4 precept and given the rate of inflation represents a greater reduction in real terms.

PW proposed and GA seconded acceptance of FinCom's recommended budget and precept.
All in favour.

8. **Planning (PW/PR)**
PW reviewed the following planning applications and gave the Planning Sub-committee's recommendation:

8.1 Planning application 23/02920/S73 – The Homestead, Frog Lane, variation to allow for a car port – recommendation no objection, all in favour
8.2 Planning application 23/02991/S73 – Vicarage Field, Church Road, variation to positioning and other changes – recommendation no objection, all in favour
8.3 Planning application 23/03053/HHD - 14 Poplar Farm Close, Erection of two storey extension, removal of front canopy porch and alterations to front of garage – recommendation no objection, all in favour
8.4 Planning application 23/02965/HHD - Sunnybank 90 High Street, erection of single storey rear extension, replacement rear extension, garage conversion and associated works – recommendation no objection, all in favour

PW advised that two appeals have been made against applications which had been refused, namely Sunnyview and the eight houses off Church Lane. On the latter JP noted that in refusing the eight houses off Church Lane WODC had cited Neighbourhood Plan policy CH1 – village character, but had not cited E1 – blue/green corridors which we emphasised in our objection.

9. RFO report (CT)
9.1 November's statement of income and expenditure was presented. CT noted that a small adjustment has been made to the statement to align with the timings/dates of the PC's

bank statements. CT will avoid making any transactions on the first of the month to avoid complications.

CT has again engaged Internal Audit Yorkshire for the next internal audit. We have not yet received the final report from Moores for the 2022/3 external audit.

CT proposed acceptance of the November statement
PW seconded
All in favour.

9.2 For approval (see five attachments), proposed by CT and seconded by PW:

9.2.1 MUW Privacy Notice – all in favour

9.2.2 Increase in fees – fees to increase by 5% - all in favour

9.2.3 Final version of Asset Register – the register was reviewed at the November meeting and following adjustments by CT all in favour

9.2.4 Final version of FOI Publication Scheme – this was also reviewed at the November meeting - all in favour of the final version

9.2.5 PC Internal Controls – In accordance with these recommended internal controls GA, as a FinCom representative, will review all spend in excess of £50.00 - all in favour.

10. S106

10.1 **Art project update (GS)**

GS referred to the previously circulated update note. Good progress has been made, helped enormously by the considerable support and guidance provided by Julia Sorrell. The expertise of the supplier of the stones is being sought as to how best to include our selected inscriptions. The majority of councillors feel that inscribing directly on the stones themselves, rather than the original idea of inscribing on separate slates, is going to have more impact and give a better artistic result.

To that end GS is waiting for revised costings for the inscriptions to put to a subsequent PC meeting.

11. Eco Area transfer update (GS/PA)

On 18 December GS spoke to the solicitor overseeing the transaction on behalf of the PC. After an exchange with M&M about the precise terms of an access clause the solicitor is going to propose a re-wording which, if accepted, should enable us rapidly to move to signatures in the new year.

GS also reported that the firm of solicitors advising the PC has the original of the 1987 lease between the MSA and the PC, plus a copy of a later (2000) draft which was never enacted. He has requested the original and draft so that we can instruct a firm which undertakes commercial work to draft a fresh lease.

12. Village green (JH)

12.1 Verta (tine) draining of the football pitches – JH is awaiting the invoice from the football club, so will raise this at the January meeting

12.2 Repairs to the pot holes on the driveway to the recreation ground – JH provided a quote of £600 plus VAT from R Perry to excavate and repair the potholes. In the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- The driveway was re-laid entirely by Hickmans just two years ago at a cost of £16,000
- Filling in the potholes is a very short-term solution, they will soon open up again. However, there is a health and safety dimension to consider and a long-term solution has not yet been costed
- CT noted that in the original lease between the MSA and the PC it states that the MSA is responsible for the maintenance of the drive
- Some drivers accelerate too rapidly as they leave the car park, increasing the rate at which pot holes develop
- A more enduring solution is required which doesn't degrade so rapidly. One example is the use of the plastic grid arrangement, filled with small hard stone or similar, akin to the material used in the Kingham car park. GA is eliciting quotes for such a solution
- The drive is now used extensively by four different 'constituencies', viz members of the public who park while walking dogs, shopping at the Coop and the like; users of the MSA pavilion; members of the football club and their opponents; customers of the Hare (which has a notice painted on its wall advising parking on the village green when their own car park is full). The PC should seek contributions for a more enduring solution from each of those constituencies
- In principle the PC could close the gates in the evening to deter usage, but that is not a step anyone is keen to take currently

JH proposed spending the £600 for the short-term remedy. CT seconded and all were in favour except GA who voted against. The proposal was agreed by the majority.

13. **MUW fete (PW)**

PW asked the PC what appetite there is to have a fete in 2024. In his view it is an important part of village life and we should seek to organise it for the coming year if enough volunteers could be found for a fete committee.

JH advised that a number of critical factors needed to be resolved if a fete is to be mounted. First at least ten volunteers will be needed to form the fete committee. That committee will need to meet between fortnightly and monthly between the start of the year and the date of a summer fete. Previous fetes/events had started to suffer from the fact that people no longer carry cash and most stalls did not have card machines. Gazebos will need to be provided and erected by the fete committee.

Following general discussion JH agreed to test the water with Alan Allday to see if he is prepared to get involved. The fete could be advertised (and volunteers sought) on the web site, on Facebook, and potentially the Wychwood magazine. GS noted that an app on a mobile phone can now be used to accept card payments, so that might make it easier for stall holders to take money apart from hard cash.

14. Footpath improvement proposal, Cotswold National Landscape (GS)

This proposal, which was emailed to the PC a week or so before the meeting, proposes improving the Oxfordshire Way, Lyneham Road, Lancut footpath 'loop' to make it usable by people in wheelchairs. The improvements would be funded by monies from a DEFRA fund to reduce barriers in the Cotswolds. Gerry Simper from Cotswold Volunteers attended to explain

more about the proposal.

JP raised a concern about the health and safety risks to wheelchair users going down the steep slope and across the footbridge of the Lancut path, and also objected to the way the proposed improvements would change the character of that path. CT added that there had previously been a review of that path and that a number of difficulties had been encountered, including how to replace the stile at Lyneham Road, and who the landowners were who would need to agree to improvements. After discussion it was clear that some aspects of the proposal need clarifying, including the source of the estimated costings, what role the PC would play in bidding for funds, and if improvements could be made to the Oxfordshire Way section but not to the Lancut path.

GS will revert to Rebecca Jones at Cotswold National Landscape to get more detail on what is involved.

15. **Burial Ground Transfer – document signing (CT)**
To complete the transfer of the burial ground from the charity to the PC a number of documents require signing by various members of the PC and trustees of the charity. CT organised the signing which was witnessed by a member of the public and by an acting Clerk.

16. **Public session for non-Agenda items**
None were raised

17. **AOB**

17.1 JH – nothing

17.2 JP

- described a meeting on 18 December between JP, PW and residents of Fulbrook to discuss proposals for a significant number of houses to be built in fields in Fulbrook. The residents wanted to glean useful lessons from MUW's recent experiences, especially in crafting the neighbourhood Plan
- referred to a WODC waterways day on 23 November, and noted that as of 15 December MUW had the dubious distinction of being the second worst in the region for sewage spillage into streams
- WODC is currently consulting on biodiversity. GS added that a survey had recently been completed for WODC.

17.3 PW – has received a complaint about the hedge of No 7 Shipton Road starting to restrict the width of the pavement, causing users to step into the road. CT to advise on the ownership of No 7 so that a letter can be written to them (GA has provided a model letter)

17.4 GS - nothing

17.5 GA – nothing

17.6 CT read out his email (previously sent to the Chair) tendering his resignation as a councillor on health grounds, but expressing a wish to continue as RFO. The PC expressed its deep gratitude to CT for his service as a councillor; the parish will be the poorer without his contribution as a councillor.

CT advised that he has received a request for funds from the scouts. GS will bring forward as a S137 application at the January meeting.

Meeting closed at 2105

MARC

1. Field rental

The tenant is now two years in arrears on rental payments, despite repeated contact requesting payment. CT therefore proposed sending a letter saying that if the rent remains unpaid then the field will be put out to tender to find another tenant. All in favour of sending said letter.