Milton-under-Wychwood Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 16th October 2024

at Milton-under-Wychwood Village Hall

Present: Cllr Graham Smith, Chair
Cllr Rod Blackman
Cllr Jeff Haine
Cllr John Pratt
Cllr Peter Rawlins
Cllr Pat Ward
Vanessa Oliveri, Parish Clerk
Chris Trotman, RFO
County Cllr Liz Leffman
District Cllr Adam Clements
6 members of the public

24/078 Apologies for Absence: had been received from Cllr G Allcock.

24/079 Declaration of Interests: None to report.

24/080 Minutes of the 18th September 2024: Cllr J Haine proposed to approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 18th September 2024. Cllr P Rawlins seconded the proposal. A unanimous vote was taken of all in favour of the proposal.

24/081 Matters arising from the September meeting: None.

24/082 Public session for all items related to this Agenda: None, two members of the public asked to speak at minute number 24/087 Section 137 – Village Hall solar panel application.

24/083 To receive the following reports:

1. **Chairman's report**
    - A replacement trade waste bin had been obtained and an update received on the emptying of the Village Green bins.
    - An offer had been received via Wild About the Wychwoods for the siting of four roadside hedgehog crossing signs on the 20 mph speed sign posts. OCC Highways had been contacted and will be responsible for the signs once placed at the following locations (and their What3words precise positioning)
        - Bruern Road: mandates.rationing.eyeful
        - Lyneham Road: guidebook.boast.sleeper)
        - High Street near St Judes: sweat.microchip.playback (lamp post with existing signs)
        - Upper Milton: skims.cute.woodstove. The PC agreed to this request.
    - A request had been received from the Charity Commission for copies of additional historic documents in relation to the Village Green charity. The Chairman was dealing with this and would report back to the PC on any further communication/update on this matter.
2. **District Councillor's report** – Cllr A Clements reported that the Executive Committee had voted to apply Council Tax at 100% on unoccupied homes still empty after 12 months, with exemptions for properties where building was taking place.
3. **County Councillor's report** – Cllr L Leffman reported on the following: -
    - It was noted that the County Council had been given an award as the best council on for recycling and the circular economy and working with community action groups.
    - Permission from OCC would be needed to attach the hedgehog signs onto the 20mph signs in the village.
    - The C/C had started the process of looking at the budget for 2025-26 and wasn't currently expecting any increase from the Government but awaits the Autumn budget statement.
    - OCC have a local flooding tool kit available on-line for Parish Councils to use.

- OCC have appointed a new Community Engagement Officer to deal with issues related to highways, water/flooding and other matters. Cllr J Pratt reported that the PC have a Community Action Plan, and a water level monitor in place which was monitored by residents and reported to the PC when required.
- Cllr G Smith asked about re-location of 20mph signs in Upper Milton. Cllr L Leffman said that the person we had been dealing with has retired and gave the PC an alternative contact with whom to pursue this matter.

24/084 Planning

1. **Neighbourhood Plan review** – Cllr J Pratt updated the PC stating that an email and attachments had been sent to WODC with the PC's response to WODC on the Expressions of Interest in the 2041 draft Local Plan. The PC hoped to receive a response from WODC after considering the PC's comments. Cllr A Clements agreed to follow this up on behalf of the PC. The PC noted that changes to the NPF were being made in January 2025.
2. **Planning Application Ref No: 24/02360/HHD – Primo Corner, The Heath** - Construction of detached oak framed double carport with storage to rear and loft area and solar panels to rear roof slope.
   Planning Sub-committee recommendation No Objection, all in favour.
3. **Planning Application Ref No: 24/02539/HHD – Whitlands, Green Lane** - Demolition of existing conservatory. Construction of new larger conservatory and access ramp to rear elevation.
   Planning Sub-committee recommendation No objection, all in favour.
4. **Planning Application Ref No: 24/02491/HHD – 15 Poplar Farm Close** - Erection of single storey rear extension and proposed pitched roof to garage and porch.
   Planning Sub-committee recommendation No objection, all in favour.
5. **Planning Application Ref No: 24/02416/LBC – Stone Porch, 38 High Street** - Replacement of four windows.
   Planning Sub-committee recommendation No objection, providing it is in-line with the listed building regulations, all in favour.
6. PR asked if anyone had an update on Dashwood House and the enforcement notice. JH had rung WODC to check on progress and had not received a definitive response. Cllr A Clements said that there was a backlog of enforcement actions but he would reinforce the PC's interest in getting an update on progress. It was also noted that the appeal for Vicarage Field would take time to work through.

24/085 RFO report

a. RFO report – Cllr P Rawlins proposed to approve the RFO report circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr J Haine seconded the proposal. A vote was taken with all in favour of approving the RFO report. (Appendix A). The PC noted that the RFO had booked onto two finance courses with OALC to be held on 17th October 2024, on internal controls and the new Financial Regulations.
b. September 2024 Summary – Cllr J Pratt proposed to approve the September 2024 summary. Cllr R Blackman seconded the proposal. A vote was taken with all in favour of approving the September 2024 summary.
c. External audit report – The PC received and noted the external audit report. The Responsible Finance Officer went through points raised in the audit report and confirmed that he had dealt with questions when asked by the external auditor.

24/086 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023/24

a. External Auditor's Report & Closure Letter: The PC reviewed and noted the AGAR Section 3 and recommendations. The PC agreed to go through the amount in reserves at the Finance Sub-Committee meeting arranged for 28th October 2024.
b. Notice of Conclusion of Audit: The PC noted the publication of the notice of Conclusion of Audit on the PC website and the PC notice board.

24/087 S137 application

a. Village Hall solar panel application – The PC considered a S137 grant application received from the Village Hall committee to contribute £3,000.00 towards the cost of supply and installation of solar panels and a battery for the Village Hall. Following a discussion (satisfactorily resolved) about how any roof maintenance or repair would be caried out once the panels are in place) Cllr J Haine proposed awarding £3,000.00 towards the solar panels on the Village Hall. Cllr J Pratt seconded the proposal and all were in favour of the proposal put forward.

24/088 Village green

a. Insurance claim update – The RFO reported that the insurance company confirmed that the file was under review and they would be looking into closing the insurance claim within the next few months if nothing more was heard from the claimant.
b. Football pitch improvement update – The Chairman updated the PC that Cllr G Allcock had "met with representatives from Oxfordshire Football Association (OFA) and WODC Leisure Dept to discuss possible improvements to the two marked football pitches on the village green. They had conducted an app-based survey on the quality of the two pitches which had now been electronically submitted to the FA. Once the results have been analysed a report would be provided to the PC along with a rating on the quality of the pitches. If the quality was low the PC would qualify for more money which would form part of a 10 year plan. Whatever level of funding was offered, it was conditional on matched funding from the PC of 33%. The PC could use S106 money for this. In discussions with the OFA and Leisure they commented that it was very unusual to allow teams to play without contributing towards the operational costs.
Agreement from the PC was now needed to engage with the various football management teams that use the green once the report was in from the FA. The PC need to make sure that control of the pitches was vested through the PC so that all users of the green have equal access to the grass and to coordinate any improvement programme which may disrupt use of the pitches for periods of time." Cllr J Haine commented that he was in favour of pitch improvement but not in favour of charging for pitch use. The Chair suggested that the PC re-visit the topic when the PC was in receipt of data about the costs incurred in maintaining the pitches.
c. Play equipment safety checks – The PC agreed to the proposed seven-week rota for regular checks and action any jobs arising from the safety checks. The rota was to commence when the PC had received the site-specific checklists from Play Safety.
The checklists are to be filled in and retained, and a brief summary of findings considered at the next PC meeting.
d. OALC Recreation Inspection Course on 2 April 2025 – Cllr P Rawlins agreed to attend a recreation inspection course. The Clerk to book a place on the course for Cllr P Rawlins.
e. Christmas Tree on Village Green – The Chairman agreed to contact the Astor Estate Manager to arrange the provision of the Christmas tree on the Village Green, and would then propose a date for erection of said tree. Cllr G Allcock to be asked to contact the owners of the old Post Office to ask permission to use their electricity for the lights on the Christmas tree and if they would be providing mince pies and mulled wine on Christmas Eve when carols are to be sung around the Christmas tree. Cllr J Haine agreed to contact John from the Baptist Church to ask if he would provide music on Christmas Eve. The Clerk agreed to do a poster for the event and publicise on the village notice board, PC website and local social media.

24/089 MSA new lease – Cllr J Haine had provided comments on the latest draft MSA lease. Cllr G Smith was reviewing the comments and would discuss with Cllr J Haine prior to the November PC meeting.

24/090 Update on church wall repairs – The Chairman had met with the architect to review the latest repointing work, the outcome of which was to agree that two more areas need rectification. However, the architect was of the view that after those two areas had been repaired the builder would have fulfilled his obligations. Thereafter, it was the responsibility of the PC to monitor the condition of the wall and to effect maintenance each Spring by repointing as necessary using a lime mortar mix as specified by the architect.
In addition Cllr G Allcock had noted that the wall to the N boundary had ivy growing over it, and test removal of ivy shows some damage to the wall. The architect had suggested leaving the ivy in place until the PC was ready to carry out preventative repointing, which was probably best done in the Spring when the risk of frost had passed.

24/091 Bench cleaning – review proposal for further benches to be cleaned – Following the successful cleaning of a bench in the cemetery and the bench opposite the Lyneham Road turn it was proposed that the contractor be asked to clean the first two of six benches on the Village Green, which required cleaning as per the assessment provided by the Chairman in November 2023. The PC unanimously agreed for the contractor to continue in the good work and to clean a further two benches as proposed. The PC agreed that no further quotations were required as this exercise had already been undertaken prior to the first two benches being refurbished.

24/092 Biodiversity plan

a. Update on actions since the last meeting (Hedgerow heroes; fruit trees; marketing and communications). – Five or six dates had been arranged when the hedgerows were to be planted around the village. Fruit trees were to be planted in a community orchard by the St Judes development. OCC to confirm delivery date of the trees. Cllr P Ward would notify the PC when a delivery date had been confirmed. No more fruit trees were to be planted in the community orchard by the allotments until the Welfare Trust Board had met and discussed the status of the orchard.
b. Sarah's Meadow – The Chairman proposed that Type 1 hard core was required in the entrance to Sarah's Meadow at a cost of £107.00. Cllr P Ward seconded the proposal. A vote was taken with all in favour of the proposal put forward. In addition, there was an opportunity to apply for a grant to improve accessibility of footpaths. The one across Sarah's Meadow and N from the High Street were possible candidates. Cllr G Smith agreed to apply for grant funding to improve the accessibility of footpaths through the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment.
c. Churchyard – The Chairman updated the PC on discussions held with Liz Watts which had centred on low-cost actions to enhance biodiversity in the churchyard such as implementing bird boxes, bat boxes and log piles for bug homes.

24/093 Public session for non-Agenda items – None.

24/094 AOB

- The Clerk had attended the latest Scribefest training event which had including procurements and grant funding.
- The Finance Sub-Committee meeting had been arranged for 28th October 2024.
- A proposal for the CNL to use DEFRA funding to improve the Oxfordshire Way – Jerry Simper had advised that work would be starting shortly.
- A question was raised as to whether or not St Judes Meadow residents were now responsible for the Management Committee. The Chair thought not but would check with Liz Watts.
- The PC confirmed that a Section 106 form was to be submitted to WODC to assist in funding tarmacking the car park. District Cllr A Clements to be copied into the form being submitted to the Infrastructure Team.

24/095 Date of Next Meeting: 20 November 2024

The meeting closed at 8.42 pm.

RFO Report for September 2024 **APPENDIX A**

A busy month.

Income -
The second part of the Precept, £26,000, was received this month along with quarterly payments for Pound parking.
£1337 was received as VAT refunds for Q1
Other incidental income received were for funerals and a donation for a cemetery seat renovation.

Expenditure -
Payments for lengths person and clerk appear twice, one for previous month. Early payment for this month due to payroll company vacation.
Payment for grass cutting also appear twice, one for a late submission for last month.
Two payments to WODC, one for wheely bin collection and one for dog and litter bin collection. The latter has been reduced from £2200 to £261 per ½ year due to the intervention of the chairman having discussion over class of content being collected.
HCI Data renewal. This is the company that provide our .gov.uk email.
Prysebros are the company that treat the Recreation Ground and village.
ROSPA have carried out their annual inspection and we have received the invoice from Moore relating to the external audit.

External audit -
Response to the Auditor's comments are attached as a separate file also on website. All requests were responded to, but appeared that some documents that when posted didn't get through.
Areas highlighted were the Asset Register and the Risk Register, (both ongoing at the time of submission,) and the Level of Reserve. The Risk Register has now been completed, but the Level of Reserve Moore felt was too high. According to them it should be ½ - ¾ of a year's spending.
Apart from some admin comments the External Audit has been signed off.

Accounts -
Total income for the month was £27976 and expenditure was £10479
Accounts stand at -
Current Account - £48915.22
Investment Account - £36703.43
Money Market Account - £0.03
Total - £85618.86

Section Totals -
S137 £8349 out of £16000 leaving £7651 (rounded off)
S145 £0 out of £200 leaving £200 "
S19 £154 out of £1000 leaving £846 "

Q2 Report -
Briefly 104% of our predicted income has already been received. However this includes all the allocated Precept and a VAT return from the previous year.

Significant variations from predicted -
The Ext Audit total include payment for 2022-2023 audit which arrived in this financial year.
The website total included the work for the Village Stones Trail.
The Wychwoods Together was hosted by Milton this year and incurred expenses more than anticipated.
The Lengthsperson's materials are up on expected but this is due to seasonal variations and new PPE.
Other one off payments were around the 100% of predicted costs.

CT
07/10/24