Milton-under-Wychwood Parish Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 20th November 2024

at Milton-under-Wychwood Village Hall

Present: Cllr Graham Smith, Chairman
Cllr Glynn Allcock
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
8 members of the public

24/096 Apologies for Absence: None, as all Cllrs were present.

24/097 Declaration of Interests: None to report.

24/098 Minutes of the 16th October 2024: Cllr J Pratt proposed to approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 16th October 2024. Cllr J Haine seconded the proposal. A unanimous vote was taken, all were in favour of the proposal.

24/099 Matters arising from the October meeting: None.

24/100 Public session for all items related to this Agenda: One member of the public enquired if the grass cutting had been finished for the year in the village as there were areas still quite long in Elm Grove. GA confirmed that the last cut had been done, but getting the last cut done at the right time to the right length was very tricky with current relatively mild but very wet weather.
A member of the public questioned the budget for 2025-26 and the amount of money being spent on the grass cutting contract. The PC explained the extra cost for the grass cutting contract was because the previous contractor has retired and the PC had therefore taken on a new contractor. The previous contractor was someone who lived locally and was prepared to do some additional cutting at low or no cost. The new contractor had submitted the lowest of five bids received, but the successful bid was still a significantly higher cost than the previous contractor had charged. In addition the PC had approved inclusion of some additional work, but that was not the primary reason for the increase in cost. The PC will be reviewing if any other additional areas should be included, and once it has a price for those additional areas will then decide whether or not to include them.

24/101 To receive the following reports:

1. **Chairman's report**
   - An update was provided on waste bins and collections – the waste bin had been overfull at times. Two reasons were cited, first an individual had been transporting bin bags from a pub outside the village and putting them in the PC bin. That individual has been asked to desist. Second WODC had erroneously scheduled the bin to be emptied once a fortnight. GS has pointed out that the contract requires the waste bin to be emptied weekly. CT noted that he was corresponding with Ubica about an invoice which he has paid and they are disputing.
   - The PC noted that Bruern Farms would be delivering a Christmas tree to the village week ending 6th December 2024.
2. **District Councillor's report**
   - Cllr A Clements reported that the enforcement notice for Dashwood House had been appealed but he expected the appeal to be refused. The PC's comments to be emailed to Cllr A Clements.

- W/O Hive Community Fund – Cllr A Clements reported that there was quite a bit of funding left in the W/O Community Fund, but it involves crowd funding to match the amount of any grant.
- Local Plan Consultation – Cllr A Clements provided the expected dates of key milestones leading up to WODC finalising their 2041 Local Plan as follows:
    - Options Consultation May 2025
    - Draft Plan October 2025
    - Final adopted Plan March 2026

3. County Councillor's report

- Cllr L Leffman reported that she had a meeting scheduled on 2/12/2024 to discuss what was needed at GWR stations and the need for the North Cotswold Line to handle considerably more passengers as extensive housing is being built around Worcester
- A consultation is being carried out for Charlbury residents concerning parking at the station and the issue of people parking in the town.
- OCC had received an award for being the best Council for sustainability and re-cycling rather than refuse going to landfill.
- The bus fare cap is due to rise in the County from £2.00 to £3.00 in the next financial year.

24/102 Planning (PW/PR/JH)

1. **Ref: 24/02789/HHD – 12 Jubilee Lane**: Demolition of existing utility room and erection of new rear single storey extension.
   COMMENT: The PC have no objection to this planning application as long as WODC's building inspector has no objection to there being no foundation to the extension and a Swedish ground anchor system being used.
2. **Ref: 24/02854/HHD – Harrys Cottage, Upper Milton**: Erection of oak frames orangery following removal of existing conservatory.
   COMMENT: No objection.
3. There had been a substantial amount of discussion on the Wychwood Post about the expression of interest to build houses on Bruern Farm land to the north of the High Street. The PC agreed to respond by notifying residents that a firm objection has been sent to WODC to the expressions of interest covering Bruern Farm land north of the High Street and Hartley land to the South. The development proposed in both expressions of interest runs counter to a number of Neighbourhood Plan policies
4. The PC has received an invitation from OCC head of Strategic Planning to comment on a proposed update to Oxfordshire County Council's Local List of Information Requirements for validation of planning and related applications made by waste and mineral extraction developers. The PC agreed to respond by saying that it has no objection to the proposed changes.

24/103 RFO report (CT)

a. **RFO report**- Cllr P Rawlins proposed to approve the RFO report circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr J Pratt seconded the proposal. A vote was taken, all were in favour of the proposal put forward.
b. **October 2024 Summary** – Cllr J Haine proposed and Cllr G Allcock seconded a proposal to approve the summary, all voted in favour of approving the October 2024 summary.

24/104 Finance sub-committee

a. **Sub-committee report of meeting on 28/10/24** – The PC received the sub-committee report of a meeting held on 28th October 2024 and reviewed the first draft of a budget for 2025/26. The minutes of the meeting will be posted to the PC website
b. **Proposed budget for 2025/26** – Cllr J Haine proposed and Cllr P Rawlins seconded approval of the draft budget, all voted in favour and noted that the draft budget for 2025/26 will need to include a new cemetery grass cutting contract due for renewal in 2025.
c. **Precept for 2025/26** – Cllr P Rawlins proposed to approve the precept figure for 2025/26 of £52,000.00. Cllr P Ward seconded the proposal. A vote was taken, all were in favour of the proposal put forward for the precept for 2025/26 to be £52,000.00.

d. **Draft Rolling Plan Prediction 2025/29 –** Cllr G Allcock proposed and Cllr P Rawlins seconded a proposal to approve the draft rolling plan prediction for 2025-2029, all voted in favour.

e. **To review and approve the PC's Risk Register review** – The Finance sub-committee members had reviewed all 114 risks in the PC's Risk Register, and added a column giving a conclusion on the status of each risk. Cllr J Pratt proposed to approve the updated PC's Risk Register. Cllr P Ward seconded the proposal. A vote was taken, all were in favour of the proposal put forward.

f. **RFO Contract** – The Finance sub-committee recommended to the November PC to employ Chris Trotman as the PC's RFO as from 1st January 2025, for twenty-five hours per month. The RFO to be on the same pay scale as the Parish Clerk. The PC unanimously resolved to approve the recommendation put forward.

g. The PC unanimously resolved the Parish Clerk should be put onto scale point 22 as from 1st December 2024.

h. The PC noted that the NALC pay increases had now been awarded and were effective as from 01/04/2024. The RFO had notified the payroll firm accordingly.

i. The PC agreed to Cllr G Allcock drafting an update to the grass cutting contract, revising the map accordingly and then to obtain a quote for cutting the additional areas. This would be presented to a PC meeting for discussion and whether or not the PC should take on the additional areas and associated costs.

24/105 S137 applications

a. **Wild about the Wychwoods** – The PC discussed the S137 application received and agreed that it wanted to encourage the Wild about The Wychwood's (WATW) project. It was established that a) this is a one off funding request and funds will not be requested annually, and b) the WATW aims are distinctively different to those of MUW PC's own BMAG activities. On that basis Cllr P Rawlins proposed to award £500.00 towards the project. Cllr J Haine seconded the proposal. A vote was taken, all were in favour of the proposal put forward.

24/106 Village green

a. Football pitch improvement update (GA) – Cllr G Allcock updated the PC on improving the football pitches. He recommended having a single contract for the works required and proposed to plan the work over a twelve-month period. If the PC decides to go ahead with this project it would be able to apply for 66% of the funds from Oxfordshire Football Foundation, but would need to provide the remaining 33%. The PC agreed to Cllr G Smith exploring Section 106 funding for the PC's element of the project costs. The PC discussed how its share of the costs should be funded if S106 money is not made available. Cllr G Allcock noted that many other councils charge the football teams to use pitches. A number of councillors are in favour of that approach, Cllr J Haine is not in favour.

b. **Car park re-surfacing and S106 form update** – GS and GA were meeting a potential supplier on Monday afternoon so that the required three quotes for the tarmac work would be obtained. The PC agreed that once the PC had identified a preferred supplier from the three quotes then the S106 form would be completed and submitted, covering both the car park and the football pitch improvement costs.

c. **Play equipment safety checks** – The PC reviewed experience from the first two checks. Following the check done by PW/GS on Sunday 10 November GS circulated the summary front sheets for each of the three play areas, those show the issues found so far and corrective actions already taken. The rota for subsequent checks was updated with dates and circulated by JP on Monday 11 November. GS suggested that the PC wait for two more sets of checks to be done and then to review what issues have been found and decide how they should be rectified. Most do not require specialist equipment or expertise and could be tackled by councillors and other volunteers

d. **Update on discussions with the Charity Commission** – GS received a set of 7 questions about the status of the Recreation Ground charity and, more importantly, what the PC intended should happen to the land if the charity no longer existed. Following exchanges with CT and PR (as people with a good knowledge of the relevant history) GS sent a response to the

Commission on Wednesday 13 November. The key element of that Charity Commission's response was: - What would the Parish Council propose it would do with the land (and any assets) if the charity was closed down? Would the land be transferred to another charity with similar purposes?

The PC unanimously agreed that the land and all the assets on it would remain as they are now in the ownership of the Parish Council as a place of exercise and recreation for the people of Milton-under-Wychwood. The PC agreed that the Recreation Ground be registered with the Land Registry and that as part of that registration a covenant be put in place to ensure that the Recreation Ground remains in perpetuity as a place for exercise and recreation and could never be used for any other purpose.

24/107 MSA new lease (GS)

a. To agree the proposed new lease –A draft lease had been circulated to Cllrs prior to the meeting to add any further comments prior to further discussion at the meeting. The advice of the lawyer is that rather than changing the lease, any changes would be achieved via a separate 'rider' document detailing changes to standard clauses as appropriate.
On the front of the lease the start and end dates would be changed to suitable ones once the PC have agreed a final version, and the rent review period at the bottom of the lease would read every seven years. One revision was to be made to Point 20.6 – Cllr J Haine to forward the wording to Cllr G Smith and then the revised document to be circulated to Cllrs prior to emailing the revised document to the lawyers.

b. To approve revised legal costs – The PC resolved to approve the revised estimate to cover the legal cost to get the lease completed for around £2,500.00.

24/108 Biodiversity plan (GS)

a. Hedgerow Heroes dates and activities – six dates have been identified for planting a total of 6,500 hedging whips, utilising volunteers from various sources. The planting locations were shown on a map which had been circulated prior to the PC meeting. The planting would be undertaken between November 2024 – February 2025.

b. Potential TOE grant for Sarah's Meadow – the PC noted previous discussions on various activities to improve the biodiversity of Sarah's Meadow (protecting wildlife on the ponds from dog incursions, laying a wild flower area, building beetle banks and reptile shelters, log piles to encourage diversity). Cllr G Smith had met with the Head of Community Grants at Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) and had discussed that TOE would look favourably on a bid to fund biodiversity improvements to Sarah's Meadow. The PC agreed for Cllr G Smith to complete an application form and submit to TOE.

24/109 Consultation on the potential to hold meetings remotely – The PC resolved that it did not want to hold meetings remotely or vote by proxy for meetings, unless a pandemic or something similar occurred where it wasn't possible to attend a meeting in person. Cllr G Allcock dissented. Cllr G Smith agreed to circulate a draft response to the consultation to Cllrs for review before submission.

24/110 Temporary Road Closure at MUW, Church Road – The PC noted that a notification had been received from OCC notifying the PC of a temporary road closure to apply to a length of Church Road, MUW whilst installation of a domestic metered water supply was carried out by Network Plus Services Ltd, from 29th January 2025 – 1st February 2025, 24 hours per day.

24/111 Public session for non-Agenda items – The PC noted that via SWAG a Repair Café is held in Shipton on the first Sunday of each month.

24/112 AOB

- The PC noted thanks for improvements to the Oxfordshire Way and commented that the recent works carried out are looking very good.
- The PC noted thanks to Cllr R Blackman for laying a wreath on Remembrance Day on behalf of the PC.
- Cllr P Rawlins passed on thanks from the Lady Reade charity for the S137 funds received
- The PC noted thanks to Cllr G Smith for the amount of work he had put into the MSA lease and other activities.

24/113 Date of Next Meeting: 15th January 2025

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

APPENDIX A

RFO Report for October 2024

Receipts -

The only income this month was from Pit Stop and Burials totalling £186.00.

A VAT refund has been applied for but has not yet come through.

The Burger Van has paid for October and will appear in November's summary

Expenditure -

Three S137 donations to Wild Gardens and Village Hall of £2,500 and £3,000 and our contribution to the Library of £2,799. RFO Training of £138. The rest were as expected.

Accounts -

The total receipts for the month was £186.00

Total expenditure was £9,682.34

The accounts at the end of October stand as:

Current Account - £39,418.88

Investment Account - £37,067.93 Including interest of £364.50

Money Market Account - £0.03

Total £76,486.84

Section Totals

S137 £14148 out of £16000 leaving £1852

S145 £0 out of £200 leaving £200

S19 £237.75 out of £1000 leaving £762.25