Milton-under-Wychwood Parish Council

Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 1930

Milton-under-Wychwood Village Hall

Minutes

Present:
Vice-Chairman Glynn Allcock (GA)
Councillor Rod Blackman (RB)
District Councillor Jeff Haine (JH)
Councillor John Pratt (JP)
Councillor Peter Rawlins (PR)
Chairman Graham Smith (GS)
Councillor Pat Ward (PW)

County Councillor Liz Leffman (LL)

RFO Chris Trotman (CT)

Five members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence –** none

2. **Declaration of Interests**
   JH Village Hall and Planning
   RB St Simon & St Judes church and History Society
   JP and GS Wild Garden

3. **Proposal to approve the minutes of the February meeting**
   PR proposed
   JP seconded
   All in favour

4. **Matters arising from the February meeting**
   None

5. **Public session for all items related to this Agenda**
   Need to confirm that the parish council grass cutting contract does not duplicate with the Village Hall for cutting of the Village Hall grass.

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

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

6.1.1 MUW has taken the lead, in conjunction with the other two Wychwood parish councils, in writing to Thames water requesting that MUW sewage treatment plant be considered for one of its recently announced phosphate removal from tertiary waste water projects.

6.1.2 A Wychwoods Together meeting of the three Wychwood parish councils has been organised by MUW for 16 April at The Crown. Three councillors from MUW have confirmed they will attend, but other councillors are also invited

6.1.3 Further efforts have been made to contact the Charity Commission to request a copy of the trust deed for the charity linked to the Recreation Ground. A document is to be emailed to GS. If it is another copy of an incorrect trust deed (for the Village Hall) then GS will re-contact the Commission

6.1.4 Ascott-under-Wychwood parish council have circulated a copy of a letter to parents about OCCs spare seat scheme, to help children travel to school, which alerts parents to the fact that there will be fewer spare seats available from September 2024. It is proposed to respond with a joint letter to OCC from the three Wychwoods.

6.2 **District Councillor's report (JH)**

6.2.1 The village fete will be on Saturday 13 July and the fair will then be on the village green from 14 July for one week

6.2.2 WODC element of council tax will increase by 5% from 1 April. Overall increases in council tax across OCC, WODC and Police will cost a band D house £2278.44 in the next financial year. GA offered to do a Facebook post confirming that MUW Parish Council has not requested an increase in its precept and indeed has reduced the precept for the 24/25 financial year by 5%.

6.3 **County Councillor's report (LL)**

6.3.1 LL responded to the spare seat scheme issue raised above, saying that OCC is looking at how to provide sufficient seats in future and suggested contacting Burford School about the impact for MUW

6.3.2 A £3.6m government grant is being provided to establish mini EV charging hubs for villages which expressed an interest. The Village Hall certainly expressed interest so should be eligible for funding

6.3.3 LL (in conjunction with the leader of Worcester CC) is meeting the Rail Minister next Wednesday 27 March to discuss and request improvements to the North Cotswold line

6.3.4 Traffic filters will be operational in Oxford shortly to restrict the amount of traffic in the city. Every vehicle owner in the county will be eligible for 25 passes per year to get free travel into the city. However, use of park and ride is still preferred

6.3.5 In line with the 2021 Environment Act OCC is consulting on its Nature Recovery Strategy, details are on the website for anyone interested

6.3.6 LL was asked to clarify the type and extent of the resurfacing to be done along Shipton Road particularly from Frog Lane to Church Road.

7. **Planning (PW/PR)**

No items notified for this meeting. PW advised that he has spoken to the foreman at the building site in Church Road to complain about 30 tonne concrete pumping vehicles travelling to MUW via Upper Milton, in contravention of the vehicle weight limits in operation on that road.

8. RFO report (CT)

8.1 Expenditure for the month includes £260 for the upgrade of the new tennis nets with large casters and associated metalwork.

8.2 Purchased two external SSD unit for backup storage for clerk and RFO plus accident insurance for them.

8.3 The final bill for the solicitors Weller's Headless has been paid awaiting confirmation that the transition from charity to PC is complete.
8.4 Started communication with auditors as some of their request terminology is unclear. Audit date 22nd April.
8.5 Received communications from WODC about waste collection, one from the EA about annual waste transfer and the other to agree to their T&Cs. I have also received other communication from WODC with the DD charges for the coming year, the monthly DD has risen from £69.33 to £73.67 an increase of £4.34.
8.6 Received communication from Robert Montgomery about the church wall. Contractors due to visit w/b 29/04/24
8.7 Acceptance of February financial summary
JH proposed
GA seconded
All in favour

9. S106

9.1 Update on art project (GS) – A survey by the supplier and installer of the monolithic stones is scheduled for mid-April in conjunction with the various landowners and interested parties. The engraved slates have been ordered and are being produced for the end of March delivery. A meeting has been arranged with a web site designer to agree how best to present information about flora, fauna, landscape and history of the area.

10. S137 applications

10.1 JP confirmed that MUW parish council has £4.5K of its £15K S137 monies left as at the date of this meeting, therefore the four applications listed below could all be awarded their requested amounts from within the amount outstanding.
10.2 Village Hall replacement chairs - £1500 requested, all in favour of awarding that amount
10.3 St Simon & St Judes path re-surfacing – £150 requested, all in favour of awarding that amount
10.4 History Society – £500 requested, all in favour of awarding that amount
10.5 Wild Garden - further payment of £1000 requested as per agreement at the November 2023 PC meeting minutes, if there are sufficient S137 funds. All in favour of awarding that amount.

11. Eco Area transfer update (GS/PA) - awaiting confirmation from the solicitor that the map of the Eco area in the transfer document is acceptable to the Land Registry. M&M solicitors had cast doubt on the plan, they had queried if the Land Registry would accept the version included. We have pointed out that it came from a Land Registry transfer document in the first place. The solicitor had forgotten to email M&M solicitors but says she has now done so.

12. Village green

12.1 Repair to area by toddler swings – agreed the best solution is to lay plastic grids infilled with sand/soil and grass seed. PR to procure grids and materials and then a working party to lay the grids and material.
12.2 Repairs to the pot holes on the driveway – having not had a response from Hickmans to a request that they carry out remedial work, JH has arranged for Robin Perry to repair the pot holes next week.

12.3 Car park re-surfacing

GA provided an update on the request for quotes to put in place a permanent solution for the car park. All three of the organisations from whom quotes have been requested have been very clear that tarmac is the best long term solution, and should be slightly cheaper than laying grid and gravel. In addition GA asked about the repair of the potholes due to be carried out next week and was told that the repair was temporary and wouldn't last long. GS expressed concern about the re-appearance of potholes as a potential Health and Safety issue which the council needs to resolve as rapidly as possible.

GA requested views on the use of tarmac, given that at the February meeting there had been some concerns raised about it. One of the main concerns is about the overall cost of laying tarmac (likely to be c.£20K). At the February meeting JP confirmed that the PC could not afford to fund that cost itself, so other users would need to contribute to the cost of the solution adopted. There was some discussion about who the other users are, with various assertions about which ones are the main cause of the surface degenerating. In the absence of any data we may have to conduct a survey of usage.

Subject to obtaining other contributions of sufficient value then the majority of councillors would prefer tarmac as the solution; JH is against the use of tarmac. PW asked about drainage and was assured that there would be adequate run off for rainwater if tarmac is used.

12.4 Re-draft of MSA lease

12.4.1 GS Proposed that the council should fund legal fees for advice to the PC at a cost of £1500 plus VAT. JP confirmed that the budget for the next financial year includes sums for professional fees which will more than cover this amount. GA seconded the proposal and all in favour.

12.4.2 FinCom has a meeting scheduled for 10th April at 7 p.m. and for its first agenda item will be to have an initial discussion about the first draft of the new MSA lease with JH and the Chair of the MSA before revising and sharing the draft lease more widely.

12.5 Grass cutting contract – GA summarised the three tenders received and requested that councillors rank the three in order of preference. All councillors preferred B, then A, then C. GA will take up references and subject to those being satisfactory would then contact the successful and unsuccessful bidders and get a signed contract in place.

13. Biodiversity statutory responsibility (GS)

13.1 Draft plan – GS referred to the draft plan which had been circulated to councillors beforehand. He proposed that it is a draft for discussion and comment by the PC before we make it available more widely for others to comment on. To that end he requested feedback on the draft plan in the next two weeks so that a revised plan can be put to the Parish Council for formal adoption at its April meeting. The plan will need to be a living document requiring updating as activities are completed and new ones agreed.

13.2 12 June Annual Parish meeting – We have agreed to hold our Annual Parish Meeting on 12 June. It is proposed that rather than waiting to see if anyone wants to table any items, we have as a core theme for the meeting the subject of biodiversity. JP has agreed to provide material/presentation on water quality and Elaine Brittan has other experts who can present, for example, on birdlife in the parish.

If other agenda items are proposed we can accommodate them, but at least we will have a core item which might well be of interest to some in the parish. It could also help extend the network of those involved in our biodiversity activities. All councillors support this approach. Nearer the time GS will circulate an agenda and the meeting can be promoted via the website and Facebook.

14. **Green Hub update –** JH has had a challenge dealing with this item because of problems with his WODC email. When he can he will contact the people who have offered to present on the green hub concept to see if they can attend a subsequent meeting.

15. **May elections and nomination packs –** GS distributed the packs provided by WODC and confirmed that completed forms need to be with WODC by Friday 4 April. In addition a range of notices need to be displayed around the parish from Friday 22 March onwards. PW offered to help with putting notices on various noticeboards.

16. **Footpath improvement proposal, report of joint site visit**

As anticipated in PC Minute 12 of 21/02/2024, on 22/02/2024 PR and JP met up with (1) Shipton resident Becky Jones, Access and Volunteers Lead, CNL, (2) her Milton-resident CNL colleague 'Clare', (3) Bruern Cotswold Warden (CW) Rosemary Wilson (Shipton resident; former local CW Chair) and (4) two CW work party volunteers. We walked Village Green (VG)-Green Lane-Lancut-Oxon Way and back by road in continuous rain. The weather reinforced the demonstration of remedial needs on waterlogged parts of the paths.

Principal needs noted were:

16.1 General aim to install wooden gates in place of stiles or kissing gates to permit pushchair passage into the paths under consideration;
16.2 CW work party to address inconvenient stepping up to the concrete mini-bridge at Paddocks side of gate at bottom of VG;
16.3 Best to gravel pave the pubic footpath path to Green Lane from this bridge over the rise that passes The Paddocks because it drains well and could be friendly for 'wheeled walkers' entering from Green Lane;
16.4 Lancut for CW work party to expand plastic gravel mesh use both sides of footbridge with step-free ramping approach to each side of existing footbridge;
Oxon Way contract to be as contemplated in CNL proposal including good drainage and horse-proof spec.
16.5 CNL would expect to get some materials movement at Lancut facilitated by the contractor who does the Oxon Way work.

Further information is awaited after the CNL bids for the projects, JP has offered help with any bid to Defra. PR noted in particular that the start of the footpath at the bottom of the Village Green requires some remedial work because it is treacherous to walk on in wet weather and could cause someone to slip and fall. JP to contact the Cotswold Wardens to see if they can remediate.

17. **Archived PC material update (GS) –** The History Society has completed its discussions with the Oxford History Centre (OHC) and has provided an annotated list of materials to show

which ones will be stored by the OHC and which by the History Society. GS to copy the annotated spreadsheet of archived items to GA.

GS has done a trawl through the parish council cabinet in the shed and has confirmed that there is nothing else in there requiring archiving. The shed itself could do with a tidy and some material can be disposed of.

18. **Public session for non-Agenda items**

18.1 The Milton to Shipton footpath which runs South across Calais Field is dangerously slippery in the Eco area where there is a muddy, sloping area just beyond the kissing gate. This was mentioned at the last meeting, is anything being done about it? GS advised that the parish council doesn't yet own the Eco area so cannot take action. PW will try, via a St Judes resident, to get a contact name at M&M to see if they will permit the parish council to lay some stone and gravel over the area.

18.2 Other footpaths are very muddy and it is impossible to use a pushchair on them at the moment. Unfortunately with the unprecedented amounts of rain in 2023/24 so far all footpaths are in a poor condition. The parish council is not responsible for footpaths but does lobby for action wherever it can.

18.3 A request was made to have a noticeboard at St Judes. GS advised speaking to Liz Watts to see what St Judes residents think about it.

18.4 A poster for the fete has been put on a telegraph pole. It has been removed by a member of the public, but JH will ask the person who put the poster up not to put them on telegraph poles.

19. **AOB**

19.1 GA will post on Facebook about the imminent elections, the new tennis net is now available, and temporary road closures of which we have been advised recently

19.2 PR requested that GS draft a note to the owner of Dashwood House asking that they clear up dog mess from their dog on the Village Green.

He asked about the parish council making a donation to the Lady Reed charity. GS to send him a S137 form for consideration at the April meeting.

PR advised that the Welfare Trust has received its field rent. CT said that MARC has not. GS noted that therefore we should activate the decision to go out to tender to re-let the field.

19.3 JP noted that Janice Bamsey, a WODC planner who was very helpful to MUW in getting its Neighbourhood Plan submitted and approved, is retiring. The parish council formally thanks Janice for all her help and wishes her well going forward.

19.4 PW attended a parish transport meeting by Zoom on 19 March, where improvements to the North Cotswold line were discussed yet again; an issue which has been debated repeatedly over the last 30 years.

The new community bus should be in service from the beginning of April. PW enquired if there had been any further movement on the Dashwood House appeal. JH said it was still with the inspectors.

19.5 CT, as per the RFO report, confirmed that church wall repairs will take place at the end of April.

The meeting finished at 2055.