Milton-under-Wychwood Parish Council

Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 1930

Milton-under-Wychwood Village Hall

Minutes

Present:
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)

Five members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence** – Vice-Chairman Glynn Allcock (GA), Councillor Rod Blackman (RB), RFO Chris Trotman (CT)

2. **Declaration of Interests**
   JH Planning

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

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

5. **Public session for all items related to this Agenda**
   Some MOP had trouble finding the March minutes and April agenda, CT to be asked to check accessibility on the web site

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

6.1 **Chairman's report**
Two items to report, firstly an update on the Wychwoods Together meeting on 16 April. This is an informal meeting of representatives of the three -under-Wychwood parish councils to discuss areas of mutual interest. Key topics this time included Biodiversity plans, Water quality and the Thames Valley Flood Scheme, footpath improvements and grass cutting contracts.

In the area of biodiversity it was agreed that Milton and Ascott would review proposals from Shipton for close coordination around four specific objectives for 2024/5. On water quality

it was agreed that a further missive would be sent to Thames Water requesting updates on their plans for the sewage works and on a request for participation in tertiary wastewater treatment trials.

The footpath improvements concerned the proposal from Cotswold National Landscape to improve parts of the Oxfordshire Way and the Lancut footpath in MUW. JP provided an update on surveys and discussions with Cotswold Wardens on ways of improving Lancut.

The grass cutting contracts discussion (partly around MUW letting a new contract for the Village Green), led to a discussion about leaving verges uncut to encourage wildlife.

6.2 **District Councillor's report**

JH reported that in the course of a recent planning appeal decision an inspector had challenged WODC's assertion that it has >5 years housing land supply, and concluded that it had < 5 years. JH will try and find out more about that unhelpful conclusion and update the Parish Council accordingly.

6.3 **County Councillor's report**

LL reminded the meeting about the money becoming available for EV charger installation, and about the £7.0M for pothole repairs in 2024/5. In addition LL advised that that OCC's budget remains under pressure and that staff have been advised that re-structuring may be required in the next financial year so that costs are contained as much as possible and available funds are directed where they are most needed.

7. **Planning**

No applications were outstanding for this meeting. PR asked if there was any update on the Dashwood House appeal. JH said that he would provide an update at the May meeting.

8. RFO report

8.1 Review of the March Summary

Acceptance of the summary proposed by JP and seconded by PR

All in favour

8.2 Review of the Q4 Statement

Acceptance of the statement proposed by JP and seconded by PR

All in favour

JP also noted that the Fin Com met on 10 April and its minutes were available to this meeting. He also noted that at the end of the 2023/4 financial year £70K (including a S106 amount of c.£5K for the Art Project) was carried forward. Which amount was slightly higher than forecast and reinforces that the reduced precept for 2024/5 recommended by FinCom was the right thing to do.

8.3 Review of the Annual Statement

Acceptance of the statement proposed by PR and seconded by JH

8.4 Review of the Draft AGAR Statement

Proposed by PW and seconded by PR

All in favour

The AGAR statement was signed as per this minute 8.4.

9. S106

9.1 Update on art project – GS advised that the five engraved slates have now been received and are stored ready for use. Surveys of the sites of the five stones were carried out in the afternoon of 17 April by the supplier/installer in conjunction with GS, PW, Julia Sorrell (art consultant on the project), Richard Hartley (who is kindly providing the machinery to lift the stones in place) and landowners/parties with an interest in the location of the stones. Draft structure for the web site material have been shared with the History Society so that they can begin drafting their material (first draft now received).

Proposal to use Wendy Morris to design/build the web site pages at a cost of £150.00
PR proposed
JH seconded
All in favour

9.2 Proposal to use Wendy Morris to update and maintain the Village website (including Art Project material) at a cost of £65.00 per annum
JH proposed
PW seconded
All in favour

10. S137 applications

10.1 Lady Reade Charity – proposal to donate £400.00
JH proposed
PW seconded
All in favour

10.2 Village Fete – proposal to donate £500.00 – JH referenced some questions raised by GA about chair and marquee hire and answered them.
PR proposed
PW seconded
All in favour

11. Eco Area transfer update

GS provided an update, namely that the transfer document has been signed by GS/PW and returned to the solicitor: M&M have also signed the transfer. We are now awaiting the solicitor's invoice to pay and then the transaction will be completed and registered with the Land Registry.

12. Village green

12.1 Repair to area by toddler swings

Rubber matting has been purchased, now need to agree a date when those available can help install it.

12.2 Village Fete update

JH provided an update on preparations for the fete, which are going well. It will involve a short parade, starting at the Village Hall, some horses undertaking dressage, Morris dancers and childrens games. GS noted that the parish council's insurers have confirmed that cover in place will also cover the fete.

12.3 Insurance claim update

GS provided an update, viz CT has collated various documents for our insurers about the date of installation of the aerial runway and about the maintenance actions taken and health and safety surveys conducted subsequently, including one a month before the

reported incident. PR has confirmed that the runway is in daily use and has been since installation in 2016. No accidents or incidents have been reported since then apart from the claim no notified to us.

12.4 Car park re-surfacing

GA provided an update in his absence - two quotes have been received for the car park and awaiting a third quote which will be from the company who are doing the high street work in August (Aggregate). We agreed at a previous meeting that tarmac was the way forward so our next decision is to select the preferred bidder then decide how we take the project forward. We have a number of options. Whilst we continue to pursue external contributions to the overall cost we could still go ahead and pay for the works out of our reserves then claw back elements from other organisations whose customers use the car park, and possibly via a S106 application.

JH requested an update on the timetable for re-surfacing. If it is going to take a few months before it is undertaken then the MSA proposes, at its own expense, to lay some golden flint on top of the recently repaired areas so that the repairs last for longer.

12.5 Re-draft of the MSA lease

GS reminded that the re-draft is needed because the existing lease has a number of clauses which are now well out of date and have been overtaken by events. JP had circulated a draft of the Fin Com meeting which included a very helpful discussion with JH and the Chair of the MSA.

The result of those discussions is a recommendation from FinCom to the Council that, in the light of the maintenance and insurance costs borne by the MSA and the improvements they have made to the fabric and value of the building, the pre-existing rent of £1.00 per annum should continue in the new lease. In addition the MSA will continue to donate £100.00 per year to the Council and will contribute one third of the cost of re-surfacing the car park (up to a maximum of £10,000).

13. Biodiversity statutory responsibility

13.1 Proposal to adopt the previously circulated plan

GS summarised the purpose of the plan and noted that it will be a living document to be updated as we complete existing actions and add new ones. There having been no comments on the plan prior to the meeting GS proposed its adoption and all were in favour.

14. Safety issues at St Judes Meadow

JH had been appraised of an issue at the St Judes estate whereby young children playing ball at the front of the area have been sliding down the grassy slope through gaps in the hedge and onto the road to retrieve balls which have gone over or through the hedge. This is clearly a safety issue given that vehicles travelling along the High Street wouldn't have much time to stop if a child suddenly appeared in the road in front of them.

It was suggested that some form of fencing in front of the hedge is required so that the children can't go through the gaps onto the road. The land is still being managed by M&M, so PW agreed to contact a Director at M&M to request that either they take urgent action or agree to the Parish Council doing so. GS will also advise a resident at St Judes so that they are aware of the incidents and can take whatever action they deem appropriate.

15. May elections and parish council nominations

GS reminded councillors who will be continuing on the council following the uncontested election process that they need to sign Declaration of Acceptance of Office forms which will be countersigned by CT as the Proper Officer of the Council.

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

JP provided an update of a further walkover survey of the Lancut footpath with a Cotswold Warden conducted on 4 April. They identified a number of minor improvements (eg improve the access to the bridge over the brook) which could be effected by the Wardens and Milton Volunteers relatively easily. More substantial changes, such as swapping the stile for a more pushchair accessible kissing gate would require some work to estimate costs, which costs will probably need to be borne by the Parish Council.

PW also referenced a separate requirement which had been discussed with the Cotswold Wardens to replace decaying and damaged wood to the bridge over Simmonds Brook below the St Judes permissive path, and to the walkway over a muddy area on the footpath towards Upper Milton. It was agreed that money left over from the M&M donation for tree planting and associated improvements could be used to purchase the timber.

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

17.1 A question was asked of JH about the inspector's decision referred to in 6.2 above. JH confirmed that two months ago WODC had affirmed that it had > 5 years supply of land for housing. The inspector, in hearing an appeal from a developer, has disputed that and concluded that WODC has < 5 years supply, thus rendering it vulnerable to challenges to its planning decisions by other developers.

JH is at a meeting next week where he will endeavour to find out more about the inspector's conclusion.

18. **AOB**

18.1 JP reminded the meeting that the first anniversary of the Neighbourhood Plan being 'made' is imminent and that therefore the team involved may want to review the plan to confirm to the Parish Council in September that the plan remains relevant, or if not how it might need amending

18.2 PW advised that as part of the Great Big Green Week activities it is proposed to have an area within Sarah's Meadow (the Eco Area as was) in which wild flowers can be planted. He will ascertain costs (of the order of £160.00) and bring a proposal to the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 2035.