

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WHITMINSTER PARISH COUNCIL HELD BY VIDEO CONFERENCE ON WEDNESDAY 7th OCTOBER, 2020.

Public Forum

The Chairman welcomed everyone joining the on-line meeting. As there were no members of the public participating there were no public forum issues raised but prior to the start of the meeting a brief summary presentation was given by Adam Withers of JBM Solar on his firm's proposals for a solar farm on agricultural land linked across both Whitminster and Moreton Valence parishes. He had asked to be able to discuss the matter with the Council as part of a consultation process that was being arranged by the project's promoters.

00/10

Present

There were 6 Parish Councillors participating including Councillors Jones (Chairman), Hay (Vice-Chairman), Braidford, Douglas, Mrs Gilmore and Paynter. The meeting was also joined by District & County Councillor Stephen Davies for part as well as John Dickinson of Moreton Valence Parish Council and Adam Wither of JBM Solar. There were no members of the public participating.

01/10

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence but Cllr Braidford apologised for the fact that his internet connection was poor and hence he lost contact for parts of the meeting.

02/10

Declarations of Interest

None were raised relating to agenda items. It was understood that all updated Registration of Members Interest forms had been completed but this would be subject to final verification.

03/10

Police & Community Safety Issues

It was noted that there had been a recent police incident at Whitminster Stores that had caused some traffic issues in the surrounds.

Cllr Jones informed the meeting that there had been a number of recent finds of empty alcohol bottles left around the Playing Field. This was being monitored and the Neighbourhood Warden would be informed. On a more serious notes, a report had been made of people seen near cattle, adjacent to the Stroudwater canal, carrying a can of petrol and appearing very suspicious. This was being followed up by the Police and Neighbourhood Warden.

04/10

Planning

Decisions to Note

It was noted that consent had been granted for the repositioning of the boundary fence line at 2 Vaisey Field.

Applications to Consider

S.20/2009/HHOLD 49 Kidnams Walk, Whitminster.

Single storey front extension adjoining existing garage.

Council considered the application and seeing it as being of no detriment to the amenity of the locality nor neighbours, resolved to support the application.

S.20/1838/HHOLD 3 Rickyard Way, Whitminster.

Replace conservatory with single storey rear extension.

Council considered the application and seeing it as being of no detriment to the amenity of the locality nor neighbours, resolved to support the application.

Local Plan & Other Planning Matters

Council had received notification of an appeal that had been submitted concerning Land at 39 Paynes Meadow. It was resolved that Council would write to the Planning Inspectorate reaffirming its previous comments in objection.

Mark Russell, Head of Planning Strategy at Stroud District Council, had been in contact with Cllr Jones advising that an Autumn consultation was being planned on the Local Plan and that this would now include sites that had recently come forward as proposed for Whitminster. Obviously, this would have a notable impact on the village and as a result it was important that the village should be made aware and parishioners be able to comment, made especially difficult during the ongoing pandemic. It was hoped that a meeting could be arranged with Mr Russell in order to discuss how best to publicise the consultation as widely as possible.

Notification was received of a CIL Neighbourhood Fund balance available to be drawn down in the sum of £157.86

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Adam Withers of JBM Solar, had given an overview of his firm's plan for a solar farm spreading across Whitminster & Moreton Valance parishes. A consultation was ongoing being organised by Pegasus Group (planning consultants) on behalf of JBM. Mr Withers stated that consultation leaflets had been distributed to residents living within 1km of the sites, although it was noted that some may have been missed out. He went on to say that his company did not own and operated sites but mainly compiled them for future ownership as an investment by pension funds and the like. During the discussion before the meeting issues such as construction, cable routes, technology, environmental impact and the like were discussed as well as possible community payments. Cllr Paynter was particularly concerned by the environmental impact of the proposal and whilst it may provide a means of renewable energy the impact on the local countryside should not be underestimated, especially when off shore wind and other generators provide credible alternatives. It was noted that the area in question is an important habitat for skylarks. After discussion it was agreed that Council would not engage further at the current time and would await any formal planning process following a hoped for environmental impact assessment.

Highways & Byways

Footpaths

Cllr Paynter updated Council on footpath issues and this was in the main to confirm that he had still heard nothing further from the County Council Public Rights of Way Officer following the meeting held with her and subsequent follow up. It was agreed that Cllr Davies should be asked to follow up and press for an update and action where necessary, given that it was his original intervention that secured the meeting with the Parish Council. Meanwhile, Cllr Paynter continues to monitor the footpaths within the village including additional routes where crops have not been sprayed out.

It was agreed that further consideration would need to be given to the footpaths map in due course.

There was a discussion regarding a tree in The Lager.

School Lane

A site meeting had taken place with Daniel Tiffney, County Council Highways Area Manager, and Cllr Davies had also attended. As well as School Lane, areas of The Close, and Hyde Lane were also inspected.

On School Lane it was noted that the road was very unlikely to meet the criteria for any major traffic calming works to be funded. However, Mr Tiffney was willing to carry out some minor alterations immediately that may have an impact on traffic speeds and problem parking the vicinity of the school. This was to include replacement/improved signs (possibly with an advisory 20mph speed); remarking of faded hatching and other road markings and edge markings around junctions and driveways to try and discourage parking the hinders sightlines. Other measures discussed included village gateways and pinch points. Both could possibly attract some matched funding from the County Council and possibly be supported by the County Councillors Local Highway Budget and Cllr Davies indicated that if the fund was to be continued he would certainly be willing to spend some of his next allocation in Whitminster. Mr Tiffney agreed that he would ask his colleagues to investigate and advise what could be permissible, as there would be no point in raising funds for road works that would not meet necessary standards, and he would follow up with the Council setting out actions proposed and matters discussed at the meeting in due course.

In The Close, he agreed to look again at matters surrounding land ownership and rights over land adjacent to the garage at the end of Henry Withers Close, although he suspected it was vested in the District Council. Subsequently, he had sent a map indicating that the footpath only is County Council land. In a similar vein he had also agreed to look into the ownership of the hedge adjacent to Schoolfield Close. Finally, in Hyde Lane, he agreed that the road surface was in very poor repair in certain areas but all were agreed that there was little merit in pursuing repairs whilst construction was ongoing.

Other Matters

Cllr Douglas asked if any action was going to be taken in regard to weeds growing in gutters and gullies around the village, particularly in Paynes Meadow. Cllr Jones advised that the District Council had not taken up the option to purchase the machine that had been trialled the previous year and no works were planned.

It was noted that an opinion had been sought on the nature of the fence proposed for the repositioned boundary at 2 Vaisey Field.

06/10

Skate Ramp & Outdoor Gym Equipment

Nothing more had been received in regard to quotes for the skate ramp and it appeared that the company I question may have been mothballed during the pandemic. However, installation of the outdoor gym equipment was under way with the contractor due to arrive on site at 8:00am the following day.

07/10

Accounts

Accounts for Payment

There were no accounts presented for payment but it was agreed that a donation between meetings be made in the sum of £50:00 to the Poppy Appeal.

Other Financial Matters

Whilst there had been no bank statement received as there had been no recent transactions, the Chairman had obtained a balance confirmed as being £27,377:07

Financial matters concerning the gym equipment costs were discussed, including the contribution pledged by the Whitminster Village Hall & Playing Field Management Committee. It was also agreed that over subsequent meetings consideration should be given to potential budget items for 2021/2022 financial year.

It was noted that the audit papers were still awaited from PKF Littlejohn as the link provided was not functioning

08/10

Correspondence

The following items of correspondence were received:

Clerks & Councils Direct Magazine.

All other correspondence had been received and circulated by email.

09/10

Chairman's Items & District Councillor's Report

Most relevant matters were covered elsewhere during the meeting but Cllr Jones gave a brief report on the activities of the District Council and also voiced concerns that had been passed on regarding the operation and level of service provided by the Doctors Surgery at Frampton-on-Severn, covering Whitminster, following the retirement of Dr Buckley. It was intended that the issue be discussed at a forthcoming meeting of Severn Voice.

10/10

Other Business

Javelin Park Community Liaison Group Update – Cllr Mrs Gilmore advised that a meeting of the group had taken place by Zoom and the site manager was leaving. Other news included that fact that no waste had been diverted elsewhere; monitoring was ongoing with no issues; the group would meet every 3 months in the future and the community fund would continue. Cllr Jones had stated that he had been informed

the grant to the Parish towards the gym equipment remained unclaimed but notification had been given that the work was about to start and a claim could be submitted once installation had been completed and the final account settled.

Other Issues

It was noted that there had been no interest raised in regard to the Casual Vacancy. Standing Orders had been adopted as circulated at the September meeting and all councillors had either electronic or hard copies for future reference.

11/10

Future Agenda Items

None other than standard agenda items but it was noted that an additional meeting would be sought with Mark Russell, of the District Council, to discuss the Local Plan consultation process.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9:50 pm.

CHAIRMAN – Wednesday 4th November, 2020.