

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WHITMINSTER PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT WHITMINSTER VILLAGE HALL AT 7:30PM ON WEDNESDAY 3RD MAY, 2023.

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting including the three members of the public in attendance. The meeting was convened to commence immediately following the Annual Parish Meeting.

Public Forum

There were no matters raised from the floor as the Annual Parish Meeting, held just prior to the commencement of the meeting, allowed for discussion on issues of concern.

00/05

Present

There were 7 Parish Councillors present for the formal meeting including Councillors Jones (Chairman), Hay (Vice Chair), Paynter, Braidford, Douglas, Mrs Gilmore & Mrs Younger. Three members of the public were in attendance.

01/05

Apologies

There were no apologies received from Council members as all were present but it was noted that County & District Councillor Stephen Davies had sent an apology for being unable to attend. However, he had submitted a written report that had been presented to the Annual Parish Meeting.

02/05

Elections & Appointments

Election of Chair – There was some discussion as to whether Cllr Jones would wish to continue as Chair following his recent poor health. Council, in general, made it clear that no one questioned his ability to continue but wished to make it known that others would be prepared to take on the role of chair if he would rather step back. Cllr Paynter, in particular, voiced his willingness to stand. Cllr Jones advised that with a number of projects running and the threat of largescale development on the edge of the village he would like to see out the coming civic year if possible but would not want to continue beyond that. Cllr Jones believed he had been Chair for some 22 years but others thought it might be longer.

Following this discussion Cllr Hay proposed Cllr Jones for the role of Chairman and this was seconded by Cllr Mrs Gilmore. All were in favour.

It was noted that no declaration of acceptance of office was considered necessary.

Appointment of Vice Chair – Cllr Jones thanked Cllr Hay for his efforts over the years as Vice Chair but suggested it would now make sense for Cllr Paynter to become Vice Chair to facilitate a potential succession if all are in favour in the future. It was also noted that Cllr Paynter would possibly be able to offer time to the role as he was retired. Cllr Paynter was duly appointed as Vice Chair whilst Cllr Hay agreed to continue in the role of managing the Parish Council Website.

Appointment of Responsible Financial Officer – The Clerk was appointed to this role.

Appointment of Representatives to external bodies and other areas of responsibility –

Village Hall & Playing Field Management Committee Rep: Cllr Mrs Gilmore

Webmaster: Cllr Hay

Watercourses & Footpaths: Cllr Paynter

Urbaser Community Fund: Cllr Mrs Gilmore

03/05

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest relating to known agenda items.

04/05

Minutes

The Minutes of the April 2023 meeting were signed as a true record of the proceedings subject to the following amendment:

09/04 Skate Ramp – 1st line – ‘aware’ changed to read ‘award’.

05/05

Matters Arising

Cllr Jones asked again if Council thought some tree protectors/stripper guards should be purchased to prevent damage to the new trees planted at the entrance to The Close/Henry Withers' Place. Cllr Braidford agreed to consider the options available.

There were no other matters arising that did not form agenda items.

06/05

Police & Community Safety Issues

PCSO Trebble was not in attendance and no crime figures had been received, neither had there been any reports from the Neighbourhood Warden, although it was noted that he could be followed via social media if interested.

On the matter of the Playing Field Pavilion break in, it was still the case that further developments were awaited once the Police Scenes of Crime Department had concluded processing the available evidence, there was no further update on this but obviously matters had moved on concerning the pavilion in general.

A response was still awaited from Gabrielle Webb of Stroud District Council on the matter of updating the Village Emergency Plan. A chasing email had again been sent and a reply was awaited. It was agreed that if no response could be obtained then Council would look to what had been undertaken of late by other Severn Voice councils.

On the subject of the Perspex panel that had been damaged in the A38 North bound bus shelter, Cllr Paynter reaffirmed that he would carry out a repair in due course as well as removing the traffic cone that had been left placed on the roof.

Finally, on this item, although no reports had been received it was noted that a fight was understood to have taken place at the Whitminster Inn giving rise to a recent notable police presence in the village.

07/05

Planning

Decisions to Note

S.23/0609/TCA Fromebridge Mill, Fromebridge Lane, Whitminster, Gloucestershire.

Trees in a Conservation Area – Removal of two multi stem Willow trees and one Alder.

No objection from District Council.

It was also noted that the variation to the solar farm consent for masts associated with the points of connection had been granted, despite the best efforts of those that attended the Development Control Committee meeting and put the case in opposition forward on behalf the Parish Council and residents. However, no formal decision notification had yet been received.

Applications to Consider

S.23/0723/FUL Packthorne Farm, Whitminster Lane, Whitminster, Gloucestershire.

Renovation of an existing listed farmhouse with some minor demolition of unsympathetic 20thC additions.

Council resolved to support this application as it was the work proposed was considered to be in keeping with the property and of no impact to any neighbouring residents.

S.23/0816/FUL Whitminster Hotel, Bristol Road, Whitminster, Gloucestershire.

8 no storage containers to be used as retail units (Class Ea) plus 20no storage containers to be used as office units (Class Egi) and toilets, plus associated car parking. Resubmission of S.22.2286/FUL.

Council considered this application in detail including the reasons for the recent refusal and pertinent matters relating to the consent for log cabins granted at appeal in 2004. Although the day nursery had been removed from the application the other components were largely unchanged. Certain aspects were unclear whilst development that had been carried out without consent was shown as existing thus giving the incorrect appearance that such uses were already consented or established. Council's largest concern related to the issues of highway safety and particularly car parking, given what appeared to be multiple allocations of the car park to a variety of users and essentially the loss of all car parking serving the Whitminster Inn and other existing permitted businesses located on the site. Therefore, Council resolved to oppose the application in the strongest possible terms, both on the basis of the issues discussed previously and new concerns arising from the pending application.

Concerning the applications received relating to large scale development North and South of Grove Lane. It was agreed that, as time permitted, consideration would be given at a future meeting to enable a discussion to be had after a planned meeting (on-line) with the Planning Officer dealing, Cris Lancaster. This would take place on Wednesday 10th May at 2pm and would be reported on at the June meeting. Councillor Jones has circulated list of potential matters relating to the sites to be discussed. It was also understood that a recommendation from Highways England had been submitted asking that any decision be deferred for 6 months to permit additional highway information to be submitted for consideration.

Local Plan & Other Planning Matters

There was still no update received from planning enforcement concerning the Whitminster Inn and Old Stables at Kidnams Farm. However, it was confirmed that additional resource was being provided to planning enforcement with the whole planning department to be dedicated to assist in clearing the existing backlog of issues during one week in May.

Correspondence was received from Bank Solutions providing an updated programme for the Stroud Local Plan examination. It was understood that the large scale sites at Wisloe and Sharpness were to be considered at the examination in public during the following week.

08/05

Accounts

Accounts for Payment

The following accounts were approved for payment:

CPRE	Annual Membership	£36.00
Flagmakers (reimbursing Mrs Jones)	Bunting & Flags for Coronation event	£100.74
Cllr John Jones	Contribution to Severn Voice Clerk	£10.00
	leaving gift (two items above paid as one cheque to Cllr & Mrs Jones)	

Audit

The Accounts for the financial year 2022/2023 were presented to the authority by the Responsible Financial Officer for consideration resulting in the approval of the Certificate of Exemption; Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statement.

Other Financial Matters

The balance at the bank remained unchanged since the last meeting.

Following the input of details on-line, at the end of the March meeting, in order to be able to set up on-line banking with Lloyd bank, it transpired that no further contact had been received from the bank and this was to be followed up through a call to the bank from Cllr Jones (already registered) with the Clerk present to try and determine what stage matters were at and what would happen next.

A note on VAT applying to Coronation celebrations was received advising that no VAT could be reclaimed in respect to items purchased to be sold or where an admission charge was levied.

The first instalment of the precept had been received in the sum of £9,100:00 .

It was agreed that Council could enter into a rolling contract with the Play Inspection Company for annual inspections and asset valuations of the village play equipment and outdoor gym.

Correspondence had been received from a Council that had been charged supplementary fees by PKF Littlejohn arising from issues similar to those experienced by Council during audit over recent years. Such charges had been applied to 117 Council's locally and following a successful appeal by one authority against these charges others were being encouraged to do the same. This was being looked into to assess the benefit against the potential time and cost of doing so.

09/05

Highways & Byways

Despite further chasing, no contact had been received from Gary Wilson, who had taken over the role of Highways Area Supervisor, in regard to fixing a date for a site meeting. The Clerk had emailed again.

On footpath matters Cllr Paynter gave a brief update there was nothing new to report and existing issues were being pursued.

10/05

Skate Ramp

With interest rates rising it was noted that should a Public Works Loan Board Loan be taken out for the full necessary amount to progress the skate ramp then early repayment would be unlikely to give rise to any penalty. With uncertainty surrounding any future planning battles and projects such as the Pavilion rebuild looming it was agreed that Council should proceed on the basis of securing a loan for the full required balance, less the appropriate ring-fenced third party grant aid agreed. This would enable a reserve to be progressed and the matter was to be progressed accordingly.

11/05

Solar Farm

A request had been made for the planning application concerning the connection masts to be called in for consideration by the Development Control Committee. This was referred to above under 'planning' and the decision was noted. At the meeting in question Cllr Jones had met with Mr Baker of JBM Solar and pressed him for a meeting to discuss the proposed Community Benefit payment. Mr Baker had agreed to attend the June meeting and, in the meantime, Cllr Jones had put together a proposal to send for consideration. This was circulated and in summary proposed that JBM pay for solar panels and battery storage to be installed on the Village Hall roof with any balance remaining from the initial £30,000 contribution offer being placed in fund to be supplemented annually in the sum of £5,000 index linked. It was agreed that this be put forward for consideration.

12/05

Correspondence

The following items of correspondence were received:

Clerks & Councils Direct Magazine.

Trow Magazine.

Councils Connected newsletter.

Stroud District Council eNews.

Minutes of the March meeting of Severn Voice along with a request to update the contact list and for Councils to each nominate two Councillors from each parish that would become core representatives. Cllr Mrs Younger agreed to attend the July meeting, that the Parish would be hosting, and it was resolved that Council would always endeavour to send two representatives to the meetings but it could not commit to that always being the same two individuals.

An updated was received on the highways verge cutting contract.

Other electronic correspondence had been circulated between meetings.

13/05

Chairman's Items & District Councillor's Report.

All Parish related Chairman's matters had been considered during the meeting.

Cllr Jones gave a brief update on District Council matters including that the leisure facilities, including Stratford Park Leisure Centre, would be brought 'in-house' next year following changes to VAT treatment.

The report from District Cllr Davies had been submitted to the Annual Parish Meeting that occurred prior to the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

14/05

Other Business

Details of the proposed Coronation event were again shared with the plan being a tea party to take place on the Sunday of the Coronation weekend. Cllr Mrs Younger confirmed that she would be assisting from 12 noon on the day and a request was made for anyone else that might be available to go along and help.

Issues concerning the Playing Field Pavilion and the survey that was recently concluded had been expanded on and discussed more fully at the Annual Parish Meeting.

15/05

Future Agenda Items

None that were not previously noted.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.09pm.

CHAIRMAN – Wednesday 7th June, 2023.