

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WHITMINSTER PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN WHITMINSTER VILLAGE HALL AT 7:30PM ON WEDNESDAY 1st NOVEMBER, 2023.

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting including the two members of the public in attendance.

Public Forum

The members of the public present were afforded the opportunity to raise any matters or concerns. Mrs Honor Jones reported on the potential hazard posed by trees located on land owned by Newland Homes adjacent to the Playing Field. It was understood that the landowner's tree surgeon had been instructed to take appropriate action.

00/11

Present

There were 5 Parish Councillors present for the start of the formal meeting including Councillors Jones (Chairman), Braidford, Douglas, Mrs Gilmore & Mrs Younger. Cllr Paynter (Vice Chair) joined the meeting at 8:07pm thus taking the number up to 6 Parish Councillors for the remainder of the meeting. Two members of the public were in attendance for the main duration of the meeting.

01/11

Apologies

There was an apology received and accepted from Cllr Hay for his absence. Cllr Paynter had advised he would be late, hoping to join the meeting by 8:30pm at the latest but, as above, arrived much sooner during the proceedings.

02/11

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Jones, Douglas & Cllr Mrs Gilmore declared a non-pecuniary interest in regard to agenda item 13 (i) Playing Field Pavilion, arising due to their involvement with the Whitminster Village Hall & Playing Field Management Committee. However, it was noted that the decision to proceed and support the project, through the submission of the planning application for the new building, had already been made. Therefore, there were no contentious or potentially conflicting matters to discuss.

03/11

Minutes

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

04/10 Matters Arising – 2nd line – comma added after the word 'key'.

06/10 Planning – Local Plan & Other Planning Matters -8th line – 'tress' changed to read 'trees'.

12/10 Chairman's Items & District Councillor's Report – 5th line – 'planning' changed to read 'planting'.

Councillor Jones also observed that he thought the approval of the planning application for an extension at Orchard View should be included. He had advised consent had been granted but no formal decision had been received at the time of the meeting.

04/11

Matters Arising

Cllr Jones thanked Cllrs Paynter and Hay for installing the new noticeboard at the end of the Playing Field drive and went on to ask when Cllr Paynter thought the remaining noticeboard could be installed and where. All agreed the existing noticeboard at the junction of The Close, Vaisey Field and Paynes Meadow was most in need of replacement and Cllr Paynter agreed to take this forward with Cllr Hay, who was absent from the meeting, as soon as time allowed.

Both the Clerk and Chairman had separately pursued Persimmon Homes with regard to the retained play area sites, the further work necessary and the proposed transfer to management companies along with the provision of appropriate new contact details. Neither had heard anything more.

Cllr Braidford advised the planting of the bulbs, supplied by Cllr Jones, around the Jubilee Bench, was on his list of matters to tackle shortly before the onset of weather that would make the ground too hard. Meanwhile, it was noted that Cllrs Paynter and Hay were attending to the defibrillator signage at the Playing Field entrance gate. The Clerk had researched some rigid plastic signs on-line and would order if requested to do so.

05/11

Police & Community Safety Issues

On the matter of the Playing Field Pavilion break-in, as reported by Cllr Jones at previous meetings and reaffirmed again, the perpetrator had been identified through DNA left at the scene and linked to another incident. It was understood the case had been passed to the CPS but still no further update had been received.

There had been nothing further received from Area Highways Manager, Gary Wilson, concerning amendments to and potential adoption of the alterations to the A38/Grove Lane junction.

Gabrielle Webb of Stroud District Council had been provided with a copy of the Village Emergency Plan for her to review, advise and to provide templates for possible approaches to updating. Dates were discussed to arrange a meeting but they had not proved convenient and alternative proposals were awaited.

There was no Police presence at the meeting and no reports had been received from the local PCSO or Neighbourhood Warden.

06/11

Planning

Decisions to Note

S.23/1787/HHOLD 6 Little Holbury, Whitminster, Gloucestershire.

Replacement of conservatory with single storey extension.

This application had been approved.

It was also reaffirmed by Councillor Jones that consent had been granted for an extension at Orchard View, School Lane and yet still no formal notification had been received from Stroud District Council.

Applications to Consider

None.

However, it was noted the recent newspaper reports had told of the likelihood of an application for 60 new dwellings on the field adjacent to Paynes Meadow. As yet no application had been submitted and Council had not received any approach for pre-application discussions.

Local Plan & Other Planning Matters

There was no direct update from the District Council concerning the major sites proposed within the village but further comments could be seen by all on the Planning Portal. This included the request for a Newt survey submitted by Natural England; a request from National Highways for a further 6 month deferral during which the applicant should provide additional information and a recommendation for refusal from Severn Trent stating there as being insufficient foul and surface water drainage capacity with no prospect of upgrades before 2030. On the matter of the possibility of seeking the application of Tree Preservation Orders in respect of trees located on the Grove End Farm site, Cllr Paynter agreed to take a walk around the site as previously discussed with Cllr Jones.

On the Stroud Local Plan examination in public, following concerns raised by the Inspectors, the District Council had requested a pause in the process to look to address the issues raised. This course of action was the subject of a growing wave of criticism mainly orchestrated by Cam Parish Council and residents of that locality. Whilst Council generally shared the view that the District Council was not adopting a realistic approach to the current situation; was failing to hold officers properly to account and had conducted the whole process in a far from competent fashion, it was agreed there was little to be gained from supporting the detractors as their motivation would be to move attention to other candidate sites that would most likely include those potential sites that Council would not wish to support.

There was still no update received from planning enforcement concerning sites within the village. It had been over two years since the matters were first reported. Cllr Jones stated that the Senior Enforcement Officer had left so the department was short staffed again and finding it difficult to recruit. However, details of the initial complaint concerning the Whitminster Inn had been located but not Old Stables/Mill Barn. Griff Bunce was now the most appropriate contact.

Finally, under planning, Cllr Douglas made an observation about the Southerly facing gable end of a house facing the A38 roundabout that had been painted a pea green colour. Cllr Jones commented that as it was not a Listed Building and was not in a Conservation Area then the owner would be free to paint it the colour of their choosing.

07/11

Highways & Byways

It remained the case that nothing more had been heard on the matter of the Community Speedwatch fund and this was an experience shared by many other parishes.

On the subject of a new salt bin for the Village Hall, the two smaller ones the Clerk had planned to obtain and donate were found to be in poor condition when emptied to move but an alternative option was being pursued.

On footpath matters Cllr Paynter gave a brief overview and there were no new notable issues to address other than a discussion ensued concerning horse riders using the footpath close the Church leading to the surface being cut up. The Clerk was to pursue Gary Wilson concerning the obstructed footpath at Whitminster Court as well as the faded road markings of the School Lane roundabout and all agreed it would make sense to arrange a further follow up meeting with him and so some dates would be requested. A new item for the agenda of that meeting would be localised flooding issues to include Packthorne Corner.

08/11

Skate Ramp

To progress matters a new bank account was needed that could be easily accessed to set up Direct Debits to repay loans and receive funds. This was being progressed and is detailed within Accounts below.

An updated quotation was received from Ten Construction Limited with the cost of waste removal from site slightly increasing and the discount reduced. This resulted in a total cost of £53,797 net of VAT. It was hoped that an order could be placed by the January or February meeting at the very latest.

09/11

Solar Farm

The Deed of Gift Agreement detailing a single payment from JBM Solar in the sum of £40,000:00 on the commencement of work on the solar farm was agreed and signed by both parties. It was noted that grass seed had been planted in certain relevant fields and it was anticipated this was in readiness for work to commence. There was nothing further to report.

10/11

Accounts

Accounts for Payment

The following accounts were ratified for payment with cheques drawn during the meeting:

Parish Council Websites	Website hosting	£175.00
Poppy Appeal	Donation	£50.00

Audit

The approved accounts had been submitted acknowledged, as previously reported, but nothing more had been heard. A response was awaited as to whether any further information would be required or if the accounts could now be published.

Other Financial Matters

The balance at the bank was remained as £63.839:02 .

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 Lloyds bank, it transpired that no further contact had been received from the bank. As reported previously, Cllr Jones and the Clerk had made contact, jointly, once again and the forms necessary to collect new signatures were to be issued to Cllr Jones by post and email. Cllr Jones confirmed that, yet again, he had received no contact from Lloyds Bank. It was therefore resolved that Council should move forward in applying for a new account elsewhere. Unfortunately, whilst easy to deal with and offering a very appropriate account, it was found that Starling Bank would not provide an account for non-incorporated bodies. However, Natwest offered a very suitable account and Council complied with their requirements. It was necessary for one signatory to be an existing account holder and that was found to be the case. Required information had been requested from Cllrs in order for the application process to proceed.

11/11

Correspondence

The following items of correspondence were received:

Clerks & Councils Direct Magazine.

Trow Magazine.

Councils Connected newsletter.

Stroud District Council eNews.

Other electronic correspondence had been circulated between meetings.

12/11

Chairman's Items & District Councillor's Report.

Most Parish related Chairman's matters had been considered during the meeting and Cllr Jones had nothing to add relating to District Council matters other than to say he had decided to stand down as a District Councillor at the next election but he would, as previously suggested, wish to remain on the Parish Council, if duly elected, but not as its Chair. Cllr Jones then reminded those present of the Remembrance Wreath laying to take place at the War Memorial on Sunday 12th November.

There was no report from County & District Councillor Davies.

13/11

Other Business

It was noted that the planning application for the new pavilion had been submitted and agreed by all that once consulted on it could be supported by the Clerk being an application submitted with the full agreement of Council.

A general discussion was had concerning a potential replacement A38 bus shelter but it was noted that the potential cost was higher than anticipated. Further brochures were awaited and Cllr Paynter suggested looking at options for something to be fabricated locally.

Cllr Douglas gave a brief update on church matters including the very substantial cost quoted to repair the church clock.

14/11

Future Agenda Items

Future of the Parish Church.

Potential upgrading of A38 bus shelters.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9:09pm.

CHAIRMAN – Wednesday 6th December, 2023.