

WESTONZOYLAND PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH PUBLIC MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 24 MAY 2021

AT THE VILLAGE HALL, WESTONZOYLAND

PRESENT: Councillors Mr Alder, Ms Bicker, Mrs Fisher, Mr Higgs, Mrs Parfitt, Mr Pearce, Ms Perry and Mr Spurrell

ALSO PRESENT: County Councillor David Hall and District Councillor Anthony Betty

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mr Hugh Griffiths

One parishioner was in attendance

Prior to the meeting Councillor Mrs Fisher completed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, following her election to the office of Chairman at the Parish Council meeting, and Councillor Nigel Higgs completed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, following his co-option to the Parish Council, and received forms for completion relating to Declaration of Interests and Registration of Financial Interests.

The meeting was Chaired by Mrs Fisher (Chairman of Westonzoyland Parish Council).

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13 May 2019, had been circulated, were taken as read, and approved as a correct record.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Chairman's Report and Resume 2019/20/21 to Date

Mrs Fisher had prepared a report on the activities of the Council during the preceding period. This was effectively her 11th year in the office of Chairman.

She began by recognising the impact the Corona Virus had had on the lives of all and the functioning and activities of the Parish Council. She described the impacts, the challenges and the hard work to make the "un-normal" as near to "normal" as possible. Business had continued to be conducted, largely through use of email which accommodated all members of the Council without problems.

The airfield, and activities on the airfield, had continued to be a major issue.

She referred to the resignation of Peter Evans (Vice-Chairman) and expressed thanks for his service and efforts on behalf of the community and with organisations within the community. Councillor Nigel Higgs was welcomed, following co-option to fill the vacancy after a selection process with two excellent candidates.

She reminded everyone that the website carried details of all local organisations and help available and regular input.

She had noted: that defibrillators had been installed at the Village Hall and Village Store (training in use was to be arranged); accounts had been circulated and audited; year 2021/22 precept had been circulated; all planning applications circulated for comment and submitted; obsolete hedging had been removed in the New Cemetery and tree planting taken place; work continued with planned gateway entries to the Village; the refurbishment of the drive and pathways in the Cemeteries; and provision of additional waste bins and lighting in youth shelter.

She concluded by thanking all members and the Clerk for their efforts through these difficult times.

4. Police/PCSO Report

The Clerk advised that the newly appointed PCSO Georgina Coles had apologised for not being able to attend. She had been advised of the meeting calendar and aimed to attend in the future..

5. Reports of Ward Members - County Councillor Mr David Hall and District Ward Councillors Mr Anthony Betty and Ms Liz Perry

Councillor Hall updated the meeting on Somerset County Council activities through the Covid period and impact on working practices. He referred to the Local Government reorganisation plans and the on-going consideration by the Secretary of State with a decision expected in the summer, whether for one unitary council or the two as proposed by the District Councils. He updated on the HPC programme, with a delay of some two years, the impact of the uplift in numbers on the workforce, and the efforts to minimise and provide mitigation. The County was to become a likely pilot area for fusion with the potential link to the gravity development at the ex-ROF site. Competition was, however, likely from Oldbury despite the potential of the "A" site at Hinkley.

As Chairman of the SRA he confirmed that Tony Bradford had been elected Vice-Chairman and described the activities on the main river routes and particularly Phase 2 work on the River Sowey to maintain and improve the channel. It was disappointing that the Government were still reluctant, seemingly, to provide the SRA with direct precepting powers.

Councillor Hall recognised the continuing impacts and concerns in the Village on traffic matters and speeding through and within the Village, with particular reference to the 20mph at the school and planned gateway features on entries to the Village. Some works prior to lockdown had not yet been completed and to progress all these matters arrangements were in hand to meet with the Director of Highways, Mr Alyn Jones. This would include the 20mph area in the vicinity of the school, although the limitations were not yet confirmed. Councillor Hall confirmed his support for the gateway projects and an offer to support as a County Councillor, Ward Small Improvement Scheme. Councillor Hall also responded to a question related to cycle route enhancement, in particular the route between Bridgwater and Westonzoyland, and through the Sowey river improvements.

Councillors Perry and Betty gave an update on Sedgemoor District Council activities, including the appointment of Mr Bob Brown as Chief Executive, and their stance in the Local Government Reorganisation debate. This included a referendum which although heavily criticised by the County Council, had seen a substantial response. It was confirmed that both members were now on the Development Committee and how this would effect Parish Council reviews. Formal meetings would be returning. They confirmed that financial support through Grant Scheme was still available.

6. Supplementary Item - Solar Farm North and East of Bridgwater

Arrangements had been made for a presentation but had not proved possible. There would be a drop-in at the Village Hall on 08.06.21 and an opportunity for Parish Councillors of all the affected parishes to examine the proposals. These included variations in locations within the Village, nominally those bordering Chedzoy and Dunwear.

7. Westonzoyland Airfield - Folly Farm - Durston Products (Application 53/21/00004)

This application had been the subject of discussion at the Meeting of the Parish Council with contributions from the applicant and agent, and members. As a result of this, the Parish Council stance remained the same, although it was understood that a decision would not now be taken on the application until at least the end of June. Councillor Liz Parfitt presented a report that she had prepared on the various issues affecting the application and the discussions. As a result it was agreed to submit the paper following further examination to supplement the Parish Council representations.

8. Additional Items

1. Councillor Higgs referred to water retention on the bend in Liney Road and it was confirmed that this was a Somerset County Council Highways matter;
2. Airfield - further increase in number of green hanger sheds and piles of concrete and rubble at the tower location - to be referred on;
3. Notice boards - Clerk to investigate and refer for repair;
4. Church Lane - overgrowth - to be reported;
5. Litter pickers - kits available with Parish Council offer to provide additional kits if required.

The meeting finished at 9:15 pm

Signed
Chairman