

**Oxhill Parish Council**  
**Minutes of a remote Annual Parish Council Meeting**  
**held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 at 8.00pm**

Councillors Present

Cllr Harbour (Chairperson), Cllr Connolly, Cllr Rivers-Fletcher, Cllr Robertson and Cllr Stuart

Clerk to the Council, Mrs C Coles, County Cllr Chris Williams, District Cllr John Feilding and one villager

**20/31. Elections**

*Election of Chairperson*

It was proposed by Cllr Robertson that Cllr Harbour be Chairperson. Seconded by Cllr Stuart.

*Signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office*

The form will be signed and forwarded to the Clerk for filing.

*Election of Vice-Chairperson*

It was proposed by Cllr Robertson that Cllr Stuart be Vice-Chair. Seconded by Cllr Connolly.

**20/32. Apologies for absence**

None.

**20/33. To receive Declarations of Interest under the Council's Code of Conduct relating to business on the agenda**

Cllr Connolly declared an interest as he volunteers at the Peacock Inn although there is no financial gain.

Cllr Rivers-Fletcher and Cllr Stuart declared interests in some footpath issues.

**20/34. To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March and 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

The minutes of the meetings were approved and will be signed.

**20/35. To note any matters arising from the minutes not included on this agenda for report only**

The litter pick did not happen due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The visit from Highways did not happen either. It will be rearranged with the Chair.

Flooding – A notice was put in the last newsletter. There were no responses to signs or sandbags so this matter will be closed now.

**20/36. Public Participation Session**

There was nothing to report.

**20/37. To receive a report from the County and District Councillor**

The main points from Cllr Chris Williams included:

**Coronavirus**

As he writes this report in lockdown and self-isolation, he reflects on how different the work of a County Councillor has changed. Shire Hall is effectively closed and most of the staff at Shire Hall are working from home although we do have regular briefings on Microsoft Teams. The scale of the economic, environmental and community challenges that we now face should not be underestimated. The implications of the measures taken to minimise the effects of the Coronavirus

pandemic are now being realised. To be effective local democratic Government relies on debate and majority consensus on decisions. As meetings are postponed so decisions are deferred. The long-term way ahead has yet to be determined and will depend on the speed that the virus spreads and its effect. The County Council, as Public Health Authority, is regularly updating its guidance in line with Government Public Health Authority advice. This latter advice is subject to change as more is learnt about the virus.

In the budget the Chancellor hardly mentioned local government finances. However, the implications of the lockdown have caused significant changes and it was a sound decision that WCC took to build up their reserves. Even with the additional funds from central government WCC will be losing some £6 million of revenue and this will result in a new budget being agreed as soon as WCC are over the current national problems.

### **The County Council**

The County Council has weathered the effects of austerity and this year's budget was based on an optimistic but achievable 4 year plan and an easing of the purse strings particularly with respect to Adult Social Care, Public Health and Children's Welfare (including early years' provision) was proposed. Climate change was the driver in all departmental Budgets as was the intention to strengthen communities and maintain Warwickshire's reputation as being a good area in which to live.

At the same time the top management of the County Council had a significant reorganisation. Monica Fogarty became the new Chief Executive and three new directors were appointed into a revised management structure. A new Chief Fire Officer together with a new Director of Public Health was also appointed.

All local elections have been postponed for this year and all being well will take place in May next year.

### **Highways**

Warwickshire roads are rated by the Highways Authority as being in the top quartile in the UK. From day to day maintenance to longer term planning the Highways Team performs above its weight. All highway maintenance is currently suspended although requests made electronically will be acted upon as soon as the lockdown is history.

### **HS2**

The County Council has a team of Officers who work directly with HS2 and liaise with the sub-contractors, in particular over traffic management. Most of the activities associated with the building of the railway are covered by a Hybrid Act of Parliament. Deviations are dealt with by the WCC team except for some planning decisions when deviation is required from the Act. At present the works being carried out are the early preparatory works in preparation for the construction of the line for which permission to proceed has now been given. This early work involves clearing forestry, Archaeological exploration, test pits and cable laying. The A423 is being used as a main access route to some of the sites.

### **Fire Service**

Earlier this year Cllr Williams visited local Fire Stations with members of the WCC cabinet. They had a good meaningful discussion and concerns have been fed back. The County, who are the Fire Authority fire authority has a new Fire Chief who is reviewing the organisation of the management structure and re-visiting methods of improving cross- fire authority working.

### **Education**

Over the year the move towards each school becoming an academy has continued especially with Secondary Schools. Kineton have joined the Stowe Valley MAT joining Bilton and Southam in this expanding Trust.

### **The year ahead**

Over the last two months everything has changed and the future is uncertain. The coronavirus has disrupted the lives and ambitions of the whole nation and here in Warwickshire the County Council has reduced activities on all fronts unless they are connected to fighting the pandemic. The majority of staff is working from home and some have been reassigned to help with the increased social care requirements. Shire Hall is closed for usual business. Information sharing and joint working between all levels of Local Government (County, District and Parish Councils) as well as the tremendous efforts in all our communities to help the most vulnerable has demonstrated that community spirit is alive and well for which we all deserve credit. Web conferences and home working is becoming the norm and may well continue as we return to normality. However, the next few months are unpredictable as the lockdown regulations are modified to meet the ever-changing situation and the nation returns to a work ethos, trying to catch up on a lost year.

Cllr Stuart asked if future funding would be cut as there will be a longer lasting effect on the economy? Cllr Williams replied that there is grant money available now and he doesn't think budgets will be cut next year. Although it is too early to say.

Cllr Feilding has been in contact with businesses across the area as there are financial grants to apply for. He mentioned a couple of planning applications, 11 The Leys and the new house being built at Windmill Farm. The Parish Council have already commented on 11 The Leys and said no objection as it gives the occupant some privacy. The Parish Council have not received paperwork yet for Windmill Farm.

### **20/38a. To receive an update on footpath repairs and stiles**

The following footpaths were reported by Cllr Stuart as needing repair.

SS17, Bouncy bridge and hole

SS35, Large hole in the bridge and subsidence

SS35, The stile has no legs and is unstable

SS36A, Damage to the surface and side of the bridge

SA14, Impassable due to brambles

SS15, Inaccessible due to flooding/poorly maintained adjacent flood and ditch. Overgrown small trees and brambles.

SS15, Rotten stile.

Signage is generally in poor condition or illegible or missing. It was noted that there were volunteers who were keen to walk the paths and check their condition. This will be revisited now.

*Action: The Parish Clerk to pass the list of footpath repairs and stiles to Cllr Williams who will report.*

### **20/38b. To discuss and approve a footpath map**

Cllr Connolly had circulated draft maps to Councillors prior to the meeting. The recent map in the Oxhill news was of poor quality. It was agreed which map would be put in the next Oxhill News.

*Action: Cllr Connolly will work with Vanessa to ensure the print quality is better next time.*

### **20/39. To discuss the bus shelter**

Bus shelters have been discussed before. A local person has offered to make a wooden shelter. WCC have confirmed that planning permission is not needed. However a survey of utilities and drainage must be carried out and the work done by a Highways approved contractor. Cllr Williams has agreed to forward a list of highway contractors to the Chair on 14<sup>th</sup> May. The Chair can then price the whole project including the utility survey and installation.

**20/40. To discuss vermin in Leys Field and beyond**

Rats are more visible in the village and they have been disturbed by the work on Leys Field and work at the pub. A recent post was put on Facebook and 7-8 people have seen vermin around. Cat food tins have been seen near the river. It has been a bad winter for rats. It was agreed that Cllr Connolly could co-ordinate any action as an individual. If the situation worsens the Parish Council can relook at the situation.

*Action: Cllr Feilding agreed to speak to SDC although there may be little they can do.*

**20/41. To receive an update on planning**

*APP/J3720/W/19/3242235, Church Farm, Whatcote Road. Appeal dismissed. SDC Enforcement are fully aware of the current situation.*

*Action: The Parish Clerk and Cllr John Feilding to make contact with SDC again following the appeal dismissal.*

*20/01021/FUL, Garden store to rear at Oakwoods House, Green Lane. Supported by PC.*

*20/01024/LBC, Replacement of existing structurally unsound window at Oxhill Manor, Beech Road. Supported by PC.*

*20/00985/FUL, Provision of hardstanding to side of driveway and double gate at 11 Leys Field. No objection with comments by PC.*

*20/00633/FUL, Demolition of existing storage building and the erection of a replacement storage (B8) building at Windmill Farm, Red Horse Vale Ltd. Supported by PC.*

*20/00566/LBC, Repair of Corner Post at The Hollies, Rouse Lane. Supported by PC.*

*20/00637/LBC, Proposed ancillary accommodation in existing detached outbuilding at The Old Rectory, Main Street. Supported by PC.*

*19/02378/FUL, Demolition of existing garage and construction of new outbuilding at Auchneiven House, Whatcote Road. Granted by SDC.*

*20/00458/TREE, Tree application at Gilks Cottage, Gilks Lane. No objection by SDC.*

To discuss the contents of the letter from SDC re Cariad, Green Lane and agree a response. SDC noted in an email dated 7<sup>th</sup> April that the new hedge has not been planted due to hoardings at the adjacent site. Cllr Stuart has prepared a response as there is nothing obstructing the planting at the rear. Cllr Feilding noted that landscaping has to be maintained for five years.

*Action: The Parish Clerk to respond to SDC and copy Cllr Feilding.*

**20/42. Financial Report**

*The following payments were approved:*

*£19.76 to L Stuart (website)*

*£18.00 to SLCC (membership)*

*£159.23 to Zurich Insurance (insurance)*

**20/43. To consider a contribution of £400.00 to the cost of a refurbished kitchen grill for the pub to support takeaway business**

It was noted that the pub have applied successfully for a business grant. Cllr Williams spoke about community grants which look after the leisure industry. Pubs may be able to open their gardens for business in July. It was agreed not to approve the contribution of £400.00.

**20/44. To authorise changes to the banking arrangements**

The Parish Council have updated the bank mandate to remove Grenville Moore and Duncan Harper as old signatories. The Parish Clerk has been added as an authorised user and Cllr Robertson is an added signatory. Once the new signatories are in place, online banking will be set up.

**20/45. To receive the following correspondence**

The following correspondence had been circulated:

Severn Trent, Sewer in Green Lane  
Oxhill PCC, Thank you letter

One item of correspondence was highlighted:

Severn Trent, Sewer in Green Lane. The sewer was cleaned before Christmas and no defects were found. They noted the importance of reporting issues so they can capture the events and investigate.

**20/46. To receive Councillors Reports**

Cllr Connolly reported dog mess as a being an issue. He spoke about signs and poo bag dispensers. Cllr Feilding has raised a similar issue with Karen Dixon at SDC.

Cllr Rivers-Fletcher spoke about traffic calming. He was upset about the negative response from WCC about vehicle activated signs and will take the issue to his MP and the local police. Cllr Williams said to make a formal complaint required evidence. Central Government have said they are not effective. The Parish Clerk noted that a neighbouring county has just recently approved for a VAS to be put in a village and funding has been approved by the local PCC.

Councillors spoke about the Covid-19 outbreak and the longer lasting effects. There will be long term impacts for the elderly, hospitals, care homes and carers and financial pressure on everyone. More people are now working from home. People are doing more exercise and it is hoped this will continue after. This is a nice place to live. Some people have struggled, especially those who live on their own. The situation could have been much worse had it been during winter time.

**20/47. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 8pm

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.25pm.