



Aldworth Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Planning Meeting

Wednesday 24th November 2021 at 7.30pm at Aldworth Village Hall

Minute ref: 006/241121/PCM

Members Present:	Cllr. Donna Roach, Cllr. John Clark, Cllr. Kate Walters
Members Absent:	Cllr. Tim Chapman and Cllr. Nick Williams
Officers Present:	Mrs Fenella Woods (Clerk & RFO)
In Attendance:	District Councillor, Alan Law. 0 members of public.
Meeting Start Time:	19.40pm
Meeting End Time:	20.49pm

- 078/21 Cllr. Roach welcomed all to the meeting. Cllr. Chapman and Cllr. Williams gave their apologies which were accepted, and quorum was achieved.
- 079/21 There were no declarations of interest.
- 080/21 There were no questions or comments from members of the public, nor any representations for declarations of interests.
- 081/21 The minutes of the previous meeting on 22nd September 2021 were read and **approved** as an accurate record. Cllr. Roach signed the minutes for the file.
- 082/21 There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 22nd September 2021.
- 083/21 Cllr. Law advised that WBC would be meeting in December to discuss the budgets. The leader of West Berkshire Council, Lynne Doherty, has been shortlisted for the award of 'leader of the year' due to her hard work and communications during the pandemic. The Chief Executive, Nick Carter, has retired and Cllr. Law participated in the recruitment panel to hire Nigel Lynn. Nigel was impressed with the great spirit and energy in West Berkshire. There is a residents' survey which has gone to 5,000 selected households in the district. This is to seek their views on council services. The Budget Simulator task is back for another year. This online tool enables members of the public to attempt reconciling the council's budget for 2022 / 2023. The Kickstart Scheme is working well; the UK Government will fund the wages of young people for businesses who create roles for them. WBC has taken on 13 recruits as part of the scheme. There

are seminars on offer for those who are interested in bidding for the scheme. Pringles tubes and other such items can now be recycled at mini recycling centres, rather than adding to black bins. The Greenham Trust is offering free trees as part of the Queen's Green Canopy Platinum Jubilee celebrations for next year. 25,000 trees are on offer to local councils.

The councillors took the opportunity to speak with Cllr. Law about the HGV route into Streatley from the B4009 and the issue of collisions with The Bull public house and Elm Lodge causing repeated road closures. He advised that there was no obvious solution to the problem, and this was due to 95% of the HGVs having exemptions from weight and route limits as they were delivery, farming or emergency services. Additional weight restrictions on Streatley Hill would not help the issue as they are classed as exempt from restrictions. If weight restrictions were lifted on Skew Hill this would re-create the 'rat run' that was in existence before the limits were added. He also advised that Trading Standards were often on site and have issued fines for anyone not making a legitimate delivery. Thank you to Cllr. Law for attending the meeting (left at 20:30pm).

- 084/21 The draft budget was **reviewed** and **discussed** and there were no queries. All was in order. It was **agreed** to request £8,500 precept for the year 2022 / 2023 which will cover any small inflation increases and the new contract with the Ambury Road Dog bin emptying schedule. This will formally be actioned at the January meeting.
- 085/21 All members present **agreed** to formally appoint Heelis and Lodge as our Internal Auditors for the year 2021 / 2022. The clerk will write to them requesting this.
- 086/21 The clerk advised that the upgrade to the council laptop resulted in the loss of Microsoft Office. It was not clear who originally added the licence when the laptop was purchased, but no annual subscription fee was paid. The laptop did have a version loaded but this was not a 'genuine' copy, so updates were not being received. It was **agreed** to purchase MS Office 365 Personal Edition for £59.99 per year and the clerk would pay for this, claiming back via expenses annually. With the recent release of Windows 11, the clerk advised that the current laptop was not able to be upgraded to Windows 11. Windows 10 will be supported until 2025 but it was **agreed** to consider replacing the laptop at the January meeting. An EMR will be set up in January to cover the cost of a replacement laptop and a purchase will be made in the future, when the clerk advises that the current laptop is no longer viable.
- 087/21 As of 24th November the current account balance stood at £12,133.00. The members' bid for the new noticeboard from WBC for £856.02 had now been received. Other items below were discussed:
- It had been spotted that a new, replacement directional sign had been erected by WBC at the junction where the Aldworth to Compton Road meets Thorn Hill, opposite the turn off to Pibworth House. This was a surprise as plans were well under way for the new traditional finger post sign to be made. The clerk has spoken to Jo Naylor at WBC who approved the grant funding for the project via the Parish Plan Grant scheme. Jo was also unaware about the replacement and had endeavoured to find out what had happened. The clerk had received an email from Heather Young at WBC who is a project engineer and had failed to communicate with us about installing a new one, when we had planned to replace it with a traditional signpost. They have removed the original concrete post which is what we had planned to place the new finger post signs on. It was **agreed** to find out how far down the production line the new finger boards were with the company in Cumbria. If they had not started, we could cancel the order

and leave the new sign where it is. If they were in the process of being made, we will need to commit to the order and work with WBC to replace the new sign.

- The playground will be inspected in early February by Fawns. It was **agreed** to book Mr Buckle for leaf litter clearance in January in preparation for the inspection.
- Elaine Cox, the Senior Rights of Way Officer, has been to visit the large puddle on the track in Westridge Green towards Bower Farm and will arrange an import of aggregate as soon as she can. There are some higher safety priorities she needs to deal with first.
- Via Email: Cllr. Williams has been in touch about assisting the Church with maintenance work around the ditch. The clerk sent over the Grant Awarding Policy and Application form with guidance on using s.137 for grounds maintenance at churches. It was then advised that the Parish Council was responsible for maintaining the verge at the Church side of the ditch, but the clerk had no record of any declaration of land ownership which would make the Parish Council legally obliged to pay for this. After explaining the challenges of giving money to churches and our grant awarding policy it was **agreed** that they should complete an application form for the cost of the maintenance and submit it to us ready for the January meeting where a s. 137 grant can be awarded.
- Westridge Green Wildflowers: The revised sight line plan had not yet been received from Paul Goddard at WBC at the time of the meeting. However, it was acknowledged that we would receive this soon. It was **agreed** to send copies of this to Yattendon Estates as they are the landowners of the green and the Westridge Green Community Initiative, along with notification of the height restrictions for wildflowers on verges. Although the Parish Council does not own the green, and thus ultimate responsibility for safety does not lie with them, it was **agreed** that due diligence should be implemented, and all interested parties were made aware of the requirements. Concerns were raised over who would actively monitor the upkeep of the green once planted to ensure there is no breach of sight lines. It is hoped WBC will help with this as the Parish Council does not have the power.

088/21 There were no further questions or comments from members of the public.

With there being no further business to discuss, the Vice Chairman thanked those present for attending and the meeting closed at 20.49pm.

Signed:

Position:

Date:

Actions from the Meeting:			
	Description	Assigned to	Completed
1	Precept request for £8,500 to be approved at January Meeting	Clerk	
2	Send letter of appointment to Heelis & Lodge	Clerk	
3	Purchase MS Office 365 for Clerk laptop	Clerk	
4	Add EMR for IT Equipment to the January agenda	Clerk	
5	Find out status of new finger boards	Clerk	
6	Request leaf litter clearance at the playground for January 2022	Clerk	
7	Email s.137 requirement to Cllr. Williams	Clerk	
8	Send sight lines to Yattendon Estates & WG Community	Clerk	