

## MINUTES OF PARISH MEETING FOR WESTONBIRT WITH LASBOROUGH PARISH ON 4<sup>th</sup> MAY 2016

**PRESENT** – Parish Councillors: Geraldine Shepherd (GS) Chair, Colin Baber (CB), John Hatherell (JH), Annabella Scott (AS) and Mark Winston-Davis (MWD).

District Councillor Jim Parsons (JP).

Parishioners: Maureen Aldridge, Anne Brown, Andrew Clarke, Kathy Clarke, Leslie Cornthwaite, Clive Halsey and Sue Halsey

John Shepherd (Parish Clerk)

**APOLOGIES** – None

**MINUTES FOR MAY MEETING 2014.** Read and approved. Proposed MWD, Seconded CB.

### **MATTERS ARISING**

Village Party – This was on the Agenda as Item 6 and would be dealt with separately.

There had been numerous complaints from parishioners, including those from Shipton Moyne and Easton Grey, about the hedge that had been planted on the verge at Parkend (now re-named Aldacre House) both in the ditch outside their boundary and on the verge beyond. The owners of Parkend argued that they owned the verge which, of course, is highways property.

We spent a great deal of time trying to resolve the situation and received much help from Tony Hicks (our County Councillor) and from Richard Gray of Gloucestershire Highways. At last this has been cut down but, as the plants have not been pulled out, there is a risk of re-growth and we are keeping a watch on this.

Speeding on Easton Grey Road. Natasha Dangerfield, who had raised the issue, was not here. However, Geraldine Shepherd had spoken to her PA this morning. She advised that no further action had been taken by the school.

### **CHAIRMANS REPORT**

GS reported as follows:

#### Planning Issues

There was only one contentious Planning Application so far. This was at Elmleaze Barn House. GS had visited the site with CB and a letter supporting the application had been sent to Cotswold District Council. The owners of Aldacre House had planning consent two years ago for the change of use of two stone-built garages into staff accommodation by inserting a door and two windows. Eight weeks ago these garages were demolished and a much larger breeze block house was being built on the site. Cotswold District Council were informed and they confirmed that there was no Planning Approval for this. The owners have said they will submit a retrospective planning application.

#### Village Cleanup on 13 March 2015

GS said that it was not her idea of a great way to spend what turned out to be a beautiful Sunday morning, but the Village Cleanup did need to be done. This year there had been a very disappointing turnout. The Parish Council provided tabards, gloves, sacks, picking sticks and insurance, but only seven people turned up to help GS and the Parish Clerk: Kirsty & Mark Winston-Davis, Colin Baber, John James, and the Syben family. Unfortunately, our usual supporters, the Clarkes, Hansens and Fitches were all away on holiday. Most of the 18 sacks of rubbish that were collected came from along the A433 and Easton Grey Road and even included large road-signs. In particular, Kirsty Winston-Davis cleaned along the A433 as far as Elmestree. Much of this area is, in fact, in Tetbury Upton. All the rubbish was piled up beside the gate at Woodlands House until Cotswold District Council collected it.

#### Arboretum

The new Tree Top Walk opened on 27 April and the bridleway opposite the exit from The Street onto the A433 was once more open.

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GS had had extensive discussions with Simon Hough at the Arboretum, who had given the PC a talk last year, regarding the events planned by the Arboretum. GS read the email from Simon Hough regarding the "Forest Live" weekend of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June and circulated copies of the map showing the traffic controls that were to be in place over that period. The Street would be a No Parking/Tow Away Zone, however, residents would be issued with Parking Permits for themselves and any guests they had visiting. She was continuing to liaise with the Arboretum over this.

Unfortunately no solution had been found to parking on bund and footpath which is set to get worse now the bridleway has re-opened. Posts are too expensive; Yellow Lines require a full consultation process costing upwards of £7K. Highways won't agree to the removal of the bund and planting it is illegal without an agreed planting plan. This may be possible and will be further investigated.

### Telephone Box

The telephone box in The Street had been successfully purchased after the due consultation period. Now, the question is what to do with it, as there are already defibrillators in the Golf Club, at the school and in the Sports Centre.

### Schedule of Parish Council Meetings

It has been decided to increase number of ordinary Parish Council meetings per year from 3 to 4 so that no two non-consecutive meetings are more than 6 months apart, as currently a councillor could be disqualified by missing one single meeting.

### Website and New Computer

Our "Interim Website", developed by the Parish Clerk, had now been live for about 6 months. Funding had been sought and received from government for a professionally developed website (£500), a replacement computer (£350) and the labour cost of putting all our information onto it (£758). Our existing 8 year old laptop finally failed that morning, but fortunately a full backup had been made the previous evening. A suitable replacement laptop had been identified and competitive quotes were being obtained. Possible replacement websites are under review but in the meantime, the Parish clerk is continuing to develop and maintain the interim website.

## **PARISH PARTY – ORGANISED BY PARISH COUNCIL ON 2<sup>ND</sup> JULY 2016.**

As residents will know the first party was arranged so that parishioners could get to know their neighbours in this "unusually dispersed settlement" to quote CDC. However, there was no Village Party last year as it had been very difficult to sell tickets the previous year (2014).

This year the party is being held at Lasborough. It is a wonderful opportunity, as Ajax Scott is clearing the barn for his birthday party on the 18th June. With the uncertainty of the weather, it is essential to have a suitable covered venue. So, many thanks to the Scotts!

As usual, a group will get together to do all the work, so please support their efforts.

## **QUESTIONS BY PARISHIONERS**

Two questions had been received relating to speed limits:

"A request to receive an update as to the progress on speed limits in the village, particularly in the Street."  
and

"A request to discuss speeding in the Street with a view to proposing that the speed limit in certain areas be reduced to 20 mph."

In view of their similarity, both matters were discussed together.

GS advised that the issue of speeding along The Street had been investigated thoroughly on previous occasions and two measures had been considered, reducing the speed limit to 20 mph and installing speed bumps or a chicane. The problem was that a 20 mph speed limit requires enforcement and this was extremely unlikely in what would be seen by the police as a relatively quiet cul-de-sac.

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The problem with speed-bumps or a chicane was that for safety considerations there had to be street lighting and residents of The Street had previously indicated that this was not wanted. Those present concurred.

GS said that she would be willing to approach Gloucestershire Highways with a view to getting the speed limit reduced to 20 mph if residents wished her to do so, but she needed evidence of the villagers concern about speeding to back up her request. Ideally, she would like individual letters from residents expressing their concerns. Andrew Clarke agreed to coordinate responses from residents of The Street.

GS also said she would contact the school about speeding by parents and by users of the Golf Club.

There was one further question as follows:

“We would also like to understand how the process of co-option of a new council member to replace Simon Wilson was undertaken and how the selection was made in the event that there was more than one candidate for the position”

JS, as Proper Officer, explained that the procedure that should be followed for co-option of casual vacancies was given in the Governance Toolkit for Parish and Town Councils<sup>1</sup> on page 103 and summarised that procedure. This procedure had been followed. Only two candidates had been proposed and seconded. Both were duly elected.

Leslie Cornthwaite wanted to know the criteria that Councillors had used to decide which of the potential candidates to propose. It was explained that there had been a general feeling that the opportunities of involvement in how the parish was run should be offered to as wide and diverse a group as possible within the parish. Of the three principle committees in the parish, one potential candidate was already a member of both the other two committees. The other potential candidate was on none. He had put himself forward for co-option when a previous vacancy had occurred, but had been unsuccessful on that occasion. It had been felt that his views could increase the diversity of input to the Council.

That concluded the formal agenda of the meeting: however, two further matters were discussed.

### Precept

GS mentioned that the precept had been kept very low for a number of years and the council had virtually no reserves. With the increase in the use of technology and particularly as a result of the introduction of the “Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities” with the requirement to publish our information on-line, there was a need for more money in the budget. As had been previously mentioned, our 8 year old laptop had failed and without the government grant we would not have been able to afford a replacement. There would be additional on-going costs for running the web-site and there was a need to build up some reasonable reserves. The precept had to be significantly increased but councillors had decided to spread the increase over two or three years. There was a general consensus that the precept was too low and there was support for increasing it.

### Venue

Leslie Cornthwaite raised the issue of the venue for the Parish Meeting. She felt that whilst she very much appreciated GS hosting the meeting in her house, she felt that some parishioners might feel uncomfortable coming to the house and might be discouraged from attending the meeting.

GS expressed surprise and responded that, with the exception of last year when five parishioners had attended, the usual attendance on previous years (apart from Councillors) had been one or two parishioners and it had not seemed necessary to seek an alternative venue. However, her views were noted and, with the increased number of parishioners attending, an alternative location would be investigated for next year’s Parish Meeting.

CLOSE MEETING

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<sup>1</sup> Governance Toolkit for Parish and Town Councils, jointly developed by and on behalf of Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (ACSeS), Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), Standards Board of England, National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Local Government Association (LGA)