

MINUTES OF PARISH MEETING FOR WESTONBIRT WITH LASBOROUGH PARISH ON 22nd MARCH 2017

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, Graham Buchan, Lesley Cornthwaite, Geoffrey Fitch, Marcus Galea, June Goatley, Clive Halsey and Sue Halsey, Lisa and Mark Lineham, Candida and Matthew Molyneux
John Shepherd (Parish Clerk)

APOLOGIES – None

MINUTES FOR MAY MEETING 2016. Read and approved. Proposed Candida Molyneux, Seconded JH.

MATTERS ARISING

Elmleaze Barn House – Application which PC had supported had gone through after a lot of argument by officers within Cotswold District Council Planning Department.

After submitting a retrospective planning Application, the illegally built house at Aldacre/Park End had been permitted.

The telephone box had been repaired and refurbished by Andy Clark and Clive Halsey. It looks great and should last for years to come.

CHAIRMANS REPORT

GS reported as follows:

Planning Issues

The planning application to build large and very ugly staff quarters at the Hare & Hounds hotel had been turned down.

However, a second planning application received, with only minor differences. The Parish Council had objected on same grounds as before, i.e. design impact on a heritage site/building. They had also re-iterated that Cotswold District Council had not mentioned the problem of an inadequate sewage disposal plan. The current sewage plant is overloaded and causes unpleasant smell and causes difficulty when pumping it out so close to a cross-roads.

Geoff Fitch had applied to improve his house at Primrose Hill. The PC had raised no objections.

A new application has just been submitted at Garden House but there hasn't yet had time to consider it. It is to carry out tree maintenance

Village Cleanup on 12 March 2017

This year 23 sacks of rubbish had been collected. For a change, after collection they had been stacked at the cross-roads by the Hare & Hounds bus stop. Perhaps due to their high visibility, they had been collected by Cotswold District Council much more quickly than usual, on the Monday. Thanks to Emma, Alison, Kate and Marcus Galea, Kirsty and Mark Winton-Davis, Colin Baber, Lindsay Hilton and John James for coming along to help me and my husband. John James deserves a special welcome as this is the 29th year that he had collected the rubbish and he feels that it is about time to call it a day.

Sadly our previous regular helpers, the Hansens and the Fitches were away, and the Sybens were ill.

Parish Party

This year the Party, organised by Parish Council, had been held on the 2nd July. We had had a marvellous evening at Lasborough thanks to a dedicated band of helpers. Tickets were, as usual, quite difficult to sell but approximately 80 parishioners had a most enjoyable evening in the Scott's wonderful Cotswold barn. By downsizing on the band, we nearly broke even and there was only a small donation of £60.33 from the Village Hall Fund.

No party is planned for next year, but hopefully we will arrange one next year to celebrate the end of WW1.

State of Weigh House and Bridge

The state of the weigh house and bridge had been drawn to our attention by Malcolm Potter. The Parish Council has no authority to directly intervene in a Listed Building falling into disrepair through lack of maintenance, so it has referred this to Cotswold District Council.

At this point it was questioned whether this did not also apply to Picards Lodge. It was agreed that this was the case and the background to the current situation was discussed. In essence, in its current form it is unusable as a home. The owner had sought to rectify this in a manner that had been supported by the Parish Council of the time, but planning consent had been refused by Cotswold District Council.

PARKING AND TRAFFIC ISSUES ARISING FROM EVENTS AT THE ARBORETUM.

In January, Geraldine Shepherd had had a meeting with Police, Highways, County Councillor and Arboretum Entertainments Manager, Simon Hough, to discuss problems re: traffic control when events were taking place at the Arboretum. She had been amazed to find that they only had 600 permanent parking spaces plus two and a half thousand on the open fields, a total of just over 3,000.

This was alright for concerts, as most people come in groups and there is an absolute maximum of 10,000 tickets. This year the dates for the concerts are 15, 16, 17 & 18 June 2017.

She outlined the Arboretum's proposals for the traffic flow this year where the traffic from the south would flow into the Arboretum entrance as usual, but that traffic from the north would be diverted down Easton Grey Road, into Westonbirt School via East lodge and parked in the fields across the road from the Arboretum. She did not know if this had been agreed with the school. Mark Winston-Davis expressed concern over such access to school grounds and Annabella Scott suggested that such concerns should be expressed to Dermot McMeekin, Chairman of the Governors, as well as to Natasha Dangerfield.

However, the Concerts aside, the real problems re: traffic and parking was at peak visitor times, especially spring blossom, Rhododendron time and the autumn colours, when unknown numbers of visitors arrive. Last Xmas they had tried timed tickets, but this had not been operated properly and was not policed once visitors were in, so it simply didn't work.

Geraldine Shepherd reminded parishioners that, after extensive discussions with Simon Hough at the Arboretum, The Street had been made a No Parking/Tow Away Zone and residents had been issued with Parking Permits. She was continuing to liaise with the Arboretum over the arrangements for this year. 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 £10-15K. Highways won't agree to the removal of the bund and planting it is illegal without an agreed planting plan.

QUESTIONS BY PARISHIONERS

Only one question had been received, from Maureen Aldridge:

"I wish to know if New Road comes under the jurisdiction of our parish. If so can the parish council approach the highways department to do something about the dreadful state of the road? I drive along to the next junction and through Pinkney on the way to Malmesbury to avoid damage to tyres etc. This road has got worse since the establishment of the Embryo Transfer Centre."

GS advised that the Parish Clerk had examined the state of the road which was dreadful in places. The worst area is around the area of the Embryo Transfer Centre and is very badly potholed. The Parish Clerk photographed the area, and had sent a comprehensive set of 14 pictures to Gloucestershire Highways with a request to improve the state of the state of repair of the road.

That concluded the formal agenda of the meeting.

Geraldine Shepherd then invited parishioners to make their views known and raise issues in open discussion.

OPEN DISCUSSION

The issue was raised that a sign had been attached, low down, on the road-sign at the entrance off the A433 to the one-way road at the triangle leading to the village. It was advertising "Posh Nosh" and saying Free Parking at the Golf Club. The consensus of those present seemed to be that the presence of such a notice was undesirable.

Action: Geraldine Shepherd agreed to investigate.

Maureen Aldridge mentioned that badges were available from the school to local residents, giving access to the school grounds at certain times, subject to conditions.

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Marcus Galea raised the issue of the large, unsightly "ALDACRE" sign that the Cardales had erected on the verge of the road outside the entrance to their drive, opposite the East Lodge of the school. Leslie Cornthwaite thought that it might well not comply with relevant signage rules. It was understood that a neighbour had spoken to them about it and they had refused to remove it. There was a consensus view that the Parish Council should write Highways and/or Cotswold District Council and complain.

Action: Parish Council to write to Highways and/or Cotswold District Council.

Marcus Galea also queries why the lighting at the sports centre and its surroundings were left on continuously during the night; this seemed to be an unnecessary waste of electricity. Geraldine Shepherd understood that the street lighting at that point was controlled by photo-electric cells and there was no time switch.

Action: Geraldine Shepherd agreed to ask the school.

Mark Lineham raised the issue of traffic queuing to enter the Arboretum. They had put the barrier too close to the main road so that when only a few cars arrived before the Arboretum was open, they tailed back onto the A433. He felt that the barriers should be moved further back or the opening hours should be extended to meet customers' needs, or both.

The whole question of traffic and parking problems resulting from the Arboretum was re-opened and continued for some time, including the discussion of double yellow lines, bollards, parking control orders, etc., all of which had been considered on previous occasions and rejected on the grounds of costs. Mark Lineham particularly wanted the triangle made a No Parking zone, but conceded that this would be of particular benefit to him. He also mentioned that he had contributed £5,000 towards the cost of the 50 mph speed limit and would be prepared to contribute a similar sum to sort out the parking problems around the triangle. Mr Lineham also mentioned that someone in Highways had made available to him some white plastic bollards that would not damage cars if inadvertently driven into them. They had been provided free of charge as long as he was prepared to install them. Geraldine Shepherd wondered if these might be suitable for protecting the bund. He agreed to provide her with the contact details for them. Others wanted no parking in the village street, but this was tempered with a wish for it to be accompanied by Residents Parking Permits. However, others noted that restricting parking here merely displaced it further up the road to Primrose Hill. Colin Baber added that the problems were not exclusive to the village: at busy periods the parking extended into Hook House Lane with cars at times even being parked across the entrance to his farm. How to raise the necessary money for whatever was required was discussed and one suggestion was to see if the Village Hall Fund could help.

The consensus was that a comprehensive traffic and parking control plan needed to be developed and costed. Our County Councillor, Tony Hicks, should be consulted and Geraldine Shepherd agreed that the Parish Council would investigate up-to-date costing for bollards and double yellow lines.

Action: Mr Lineham to provide details re: white plastic bollards.

Action: Parish Council to investigate costing for bollards and double yellow lines.

The problem of traffic to and from the school was raised. School traffic used the shot-cut along The Street to the entrance beside Rose Cottage, passing through the adjacent Yellow Barrier which was left open during the day. Residents wondered whether this barrier could be kept closed. Also, there were complaints of speeding down the Easton Grey Road. This appeared to be almost exclusively parents and others entering the school at the East Lodge. Very little through traffic, continuing on down the road, appeared to be speeding.

Action: Geraldine Shepherd agreed to contact Natasha Dangerfield.

Finally, Graham Buchan queried who owned the covert opposite the Old Rectory on the road to the village off the A433. An ivy covered tree had fallen down and another beside it was hanging over the road dangerously. Other branches hanging over the road at that point needed attention. It was believed that the land belonged to Simon Tomlinson.

Action: Geraldine Shepherd agreed to contact him about it.

There being no further issues raised, Geraldine Shepherd declared the meeting closed.

CLOSE MEETING