

Minutes of the Meeting of Beechingstoke Parish Council held on

Tuesday 29th November at 6.30pm in the Woodborough Parish Room

Present: Councillors Paul Oatway, Aimee Harman, Rosa Lancaster, David Pritchett and Edd Wright.

Clerk Ruth Kinderman

Residents: Jenny Harman, Carol Prosser, Ian Prosser, Jane Gumbrell, Alan Gumbrell, Sally Banham, Pops Genever, Joan Coombes, Winston Coombes, David Nutland, Lee Emery, Ben Kneale, James Noble.

Cllr Oatway welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked them for coming.

Cllr Oatway introduced himself as the Wiltshire Unitary Councillor for Pewsey Vale West; he is also Vice-Chairman of the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and Chairman of Milton Lilbourne Parish Council. He agreed to be the interim chairman of this parish council while it is established and to enable the newly appointed councillors gain some experience.

Cllr Oatway explained that the Community Governance Review (CGR) team at Wiltshire Council continually reviews governance arrangements across the county and amends, splits and creates parish councils as necessary after due consultation. The 2020/2021 CGR had addressed four anomalies within Cllr Oatway's division: Charlton St Peter & Wilsford, and Wilcot, Huish & Oare parish councils had both been re-named, with the latter also correcting its boundary with Pewsey; Woodborough and Manningford parish councils had mutually agreed to change their boundary; and the lack of any local democracy in Beechingstoke had been addressed. Initial consultation had eliminated the option to merge with a neighbouring parish with most residents preferring to be independent.

Cllr Oatway explained that parish councils engage on behalf of their residents with Wiltshire Council, the Area Board and the Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group (LHFIG, formerly CATG) to help direct funding to where needed. The Pewsey Community Area Partnership (PCAP) works for parish councils throughout the Pewsey Vale by working with the Area Board and Wiltshire Council to address problems common to several parishes. Parish councils operate according to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and uphold a Code of Conduct for their members.

After discussion, it became apparent that several residents at the eastern end of the parish had received no further communication about the development of the parish council after the initial consultation, until receiving the invitation to this meeting. Cllr Oatway and the Clerk will follow this up with Democratic Services.

ACTION:PO/RK

All councillors introduced themselves to the residents in attendance.

1. To receive apologies for absence

Residents Emma O’Grady and Nancy Thomson

2. To declare interests

None declared.

3. To approve minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2022

All agreed that these were an accurate record; signed accordingly by Cllr Oatway.

4. To consider matters arising

Clerk to re-issue log in details and instructions for completing the online Register of Interests.

ACTION:RK

Clerk is in the process of liaising with Charles Lucas to obtain the dormant bank balance and names of other signatories; Barclays bank will not disclose details to the Clerk. **ACTION:RK**

Cllr Wright has an appointment with Lloyds Bank on Saturday to arrange the new bank account. **ACTION:EW**

Wiltshire Council is willing to host this parish council’s documents on its website for 2023/2024; the parish council is expected to have its own website by the commencement of 2024/2025.

As agreed, a flyer had been distributed to every household inviting residents to this meeting. Cllr Wright reported that a Beechingstoke WhatsApp group is established, with several households having joined and many ideas being discussed.

Cllr Wright had inquired with residents about excessive parking on the grassed area at Limberstone; it appears that the vehicles were connected with a christening at the church.

5. To consider speed limits

Cllr Oatway invited councillors to restate the problems as discussed at the previous meetings. Cllr Lancaster explained that although the majority of vehicles along the Woodborough and Marden roads are probably travelling at the limit of 60mph, rather than breaking the limit, this speed is hazardous for pedestrians and cyclists, especially as the road is too narrow in places for two vehicles to pass comfortably. It was noted that the main A345 between Woodbridge and Upavon has a limit of 50mph. Cllr Oatway said that the entire C38 (Broad Street) from Lockeridge to Woodbridge had been reviewed some years ago, with various speed limits implemented along the whole length; this review had not captured Beechingstoke, apart from the Broad Street section.

It was agreed that a standard Speed Indicator Device (SID) would be inappropriate, as the perceived need is to reduce the limit, rather than to address vehicles travelling in excess of the limit. An alternative device showing 'SLOW DOWN' could be considered; machines cost approximately £2000.

Cllr Oatway said that a speed survey ('metro count') should be undertaken as the first step in understanding the problem; he suggested two sets of speed strips should be laid at agreed locations in order to collect data including time, date, type of vehicle and speed of travel. Once the collated traffic volumes and speeds are available, a site meeting with Mark Stansby, Senior Wiltshire Highways Engineer can be arranged, to be attended by Cllr Oatway and at least one other parish councillor.

Cllr Lancaster proposed that the metrocount and site meeting as suggested by Cllr Oatway be implemented; seconded by Cllr Wright, all in favour. **ACTION:PO**

Cllr Oatway said that any additional signage found to be necessary would be mainly funded by LHFIG (Local Highways and Footpaths Improvement Group, formerly CATG), with parish councils expected to contribute 10% of the cost.

6. To discuss budget for 2023/2024

A draft budget had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting; hard copies were distributed to all attendees at the meeting.

Clerk explained the audit procedure, with an external audit compulsory for the first three years of a new parish council.

Clerk expressed a willingness to complete a self-assessed tax return at the end of the financial year, but it was agreed to appoint Charlton Baker for payroll services in line with her other parish councils.

Councillors reported mixed opinions among residents as to the need for public waste bins for general litter and dog bags. Cllr Oatway asked for a show of hands from the floor; no residents in attendance were in support of installing any bins and this item was removed from the draft budget.

Clerk explained Section 137 payments as expenditure made by parish councils for which they have no other power as laid out in legislation. S137 payments are limited to an annual amount per capita (£8.82 during 2022/2023) and must be spent to the benefit of many parishioners, rather than a few.

It was agreed to retain £250 in the budget for future donations to Pewsey Area Community Partnership if considered appropriate; it was agreed not to make any donation during the first year so that the budgeted £250 was available to spend in the parish if required.

The first draft budget had shown anticipated expenditure for 2023/2024 as £4640, reduced to £4270 once the purchase of a bin and the associated emptying costs had been removed.

In response to comments from the floor, Clerk said that a noticeboard is necessary to fulfil the legal obligation to post hard copy of agenda and minutes in at least one location in the parish; the existing noticeboard near the church is in need of repair or replacement, and parish councillors feel that at least one more noticeboard is desirable due to the dispersed population of the parish.

Clerk explained that a website is a legal requirement; the Localism Act 2012 and the Transparency Code 2014 require that parish council documents are available online. End of year accounting documents are also required to be uploaded to a website.

Some resentment was expressed from the floor about the need to pay hire fees to a venue in a neighbouring parish for meetings; it was noted that the only public venue in Beechingstoke is the church, which would also require a financial contribution for any meetings held there.

7. To set precept for 2023/2024

Copies of sample precept figures and the corresponding annual cost to households had been distributed to councillors prior to the meetings and to all attendees at the meeting. Clerk explained that a Band D property is an average property; each parish has a tax base which is the equivalent number of Band D properties within it. The precept is the amount of tax collected for parish councils by Wiltshire Council through the council tax bill. The precept divided by the tax base gives the Band D annual cost and the costs to other bands are calculated proportionately. The tax base for Beechingstoke for 2023/2024 is 67.53, so each £1000 of precept will cost £14.81 to a Band D property.

In response to concerns from the floor about the potential negative reaction to an extra cost on council tax bills, likely to be more per household than Woodborough residents pay, it was agreed that further information should be sent out to all residents explaining the formation of the parish council and what the precept is; it was noted that the invitation to this meeting was intended to meet that need.

Cllr Oatway asked councillors to vote for one of three options as suggested by the budget.

No councillors supported a precept of £5000.

Cllrs Wright and Harman supported a precept of £4500.

Cllrs Pratchitt and Lancaster supported a precept of £4270.

Cllr Oatway gave the casting vote for a precept of £4270, reflecting the mood from the floor whilst expressing his belief that £4500 would have been the better option in the long term.

8. To review planning applications

- i) PL/2022/08334 - 97 Broad Street, Beechingstoke, SN9 6HW
Proposal: Demolition of single garage and erection of replacement garage/ home workshop with storage above
Comments by 6th December

Plans had been distributed to councillors prior to the meeting and were available to view at the meeting. Clerk explained that any comment the parish council may choose to make to Wiltshire Planning on a planning application carries no more weight than any other individual resident's comment. Although the parish council may reflect residents' opinions in its response, Clerk advised that where possible residents should submit their own responses directly to Wiltshire Planning; in general, the more comments received, the more the consideration given to an application by Planning Officers.

Councillors agreed that they had no objection to the principle of the application. Cllrs Wright and Harman will conduct a site visit and visit the neighbouring property to understand comments made from the floor regarding the disproportionate size, the blocking of light and the current parking arrangements which make the Bottle Farm exit hazardous; this risk will be heightened should the application be approved but unable to house all the required vehicles.

ACTION:AH/EW

Clerk to draft and circulate a response incorporating comments made at the meeting and any additional comments made during the site visit.

ACTION:RK

9. To set date of next meeting

The next meeting of the parish council will be held on Tuesday 31st January 2023 at 7pm in the Woodborough Parish Room.

Meeting closed at 8.15pm