

# WESTON ON THE GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES

For the meeting of Parish Council, held in Village Hall on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024

Meeting Number 24.409

*Note for information: Cherwell District Council – CDC, Oxfordshire County Council - OCC*

### Public Participation

Resident, Roger Evans, provided some background history to the Schoolfield. The field is a ridge and furrow field which is not considered a high priority site by English Heritage and therefore not designated as a heritage site. The field was sold to Lagan Homes around 10 years ago. The Schoolfield Group was formed by residents to oppose development on the field.

The field has now been parcelled up to be sold as horse paddocks at auction on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 (an online and in person auction). The full details of the site were not available online at this time. This is of concern to residents as it is a continued development threat, the initial particulars suggest prime land on the edge of the village. There is concern over the description of the land being sold and who may buy it.

It was noted that flooding on the field has always been bad which would pose a difficulty to building but also increases the potential of flooding to other areas of the village.

The land use of the Schoolfield is classed as agricultural which does not include horse paddocks and therefore a change of use would be required. If a horse grazes on the field then it is termed agricultural, if hay is needed to be brought in for the horses then it is termed a horse paddock.

There is also a rights of way complication as the footpaths have been fenced off incorrectly, therefore the public rights of way have been moved without consent.

A meeting of the Schoolfield Group will be held shortly (given the short deadline of 22<sup>nd</sup> May) to discuss the issue which Councillors will also attend to see what support they can provide. It was suggested that a letter to the auctioneer could be sent to draw attention to potential buyers of the following points:

- Opposition in previous Cherwell Local Plan
- Technically agricultural land
- Risk of flooding
- Rights of way not currently accurate so implication over plots of land being sold
- Lack of access as landlocked field

The Parish Council wrote to Lagan Homes last year indicating that villagers would be interested in buying the field if it came to market, however it was confirmed that the company had not approached the Parish Council with these new proposals.

**Action:** Councillors to consider actions following a residents meeting being held to discuss the sale of the Schoolfield site.

A resident also raised concern over parking in the bus area on Northampton Road linking to visibility exiting driveways and access for the bus. Clerk to raise the issue with OCC Highways and Graham Barnett as OCC Parish Transport representative can raise it with the OCC public transport planner.

**Action:** Clerk to raise issue over parking in bus layby with OCC Highways and OCC Transport representative, Graham Barnett, can raise it with the OCC public transport manager.

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**24.409.1 To Receive:** Apologies for non-attendance

Councillors Bohm (DB), Lanham (BL), Davis (SD), Miller (JM) and Rowan (TR) were all present.

Councillor Nigel Simpson (Oxfordshire County Council) was also in attendance.

6 members of the public were in attendance. James Henderson sent his apologies.

**24.409.2 To Receive:** Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest declared for this meeting.

**24.409.3 For Information:** Update on village matters (DB)

DB provided a thank you to the team of councillors and the clerk for their commitment to our village and to the tasks they have agreed to lead. Being a volunteer at this level is demanding, public facing and at times difficult. We may struggle to balance our home life with our responsibilities. All DB asks is that each one of the Councillors remain open about the challenges and shares any obstacles.

DB highlighted the Council's aim to move forward and conclude some ongoing, frustrating long term projects e.g. traffic, oak tree footpath and the Neighbourhood Plan review. The recent playground works and the areas future development is an exciting project to take forward.

The Village Hall event provided a sense of comradery and willingness to help. Newcomers are very important to involve in village life and we need to build forward to create the team that will take things forward in future years.

**24.409.4 For Information:** Clerk report (Clerk)

The clerks report to the Council was noted which confirmed the standard clerk salary payments from the Parish Council bank account along with the establishment of an annual direct debit to pay the Information Commissioner's data protection fee.

The Council also received payment from CDC on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024 for the first instalment of the precept (£12,974.50) and a £500 grant from the OCC Councillor Priority fund on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

OCC Highways have been in contact to provide information on community engagement following their restructure. The clerk plans to meet with their representative in mid-May.

**24.409.5 For Information:** Update on oak tree footpath (Roger Evans, RE)

RE confirmed to the Council that there was no news of any progress being made. There is a stand-off between CDC and OCC as OCC has not provided the method statement information required.

Councillor Simpson has been chasing key personnel but no one is now taking responsibility for the project and no one is therefore replying. The Parish Council requested that Councillor Simpson contact the Chief Executives of both councils again.

It was suggested that a timetable of actions is required to be provided, to cover:

- 1. Completion of the method statement
- 2. When would CDC process the method statement and sign it off
- 3. Provisional start date of contractor

CDC is also considered responsible for this issue and should also be chasing OCC for a solution.

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The Parish Council have decided not to hire a contractor directly to write the method statement as there is no guarantee that it will be accepted by OCC/CDC.

A formal complaint will be submitted to the local ombudsman. RE agreed to support with the planning information but someone on the Parish Council would be required to lead on the complaint, particularly relating to the financial and legal side.

**Action:** Councillors to investigate submitting a formal complaint to the local ombudsman regarding OCC/CDC involvement in the oak tree footpath.

#### **24.409.6 For Information:** Update on Gigaclear and village survey (DB)

DB thanked James Henderson for organising and collating the village Gigaclear survey responses. There was around a 20% response rate (48 responses) and the summary and raw data had been provided to Councillors and placed on Parish Council website for information.

Councillors provided a summary overview of key points following their review of the survey:

1. Poor communication at all levels of the process, including inconsistent information and cancellations without notice.
2. Poor local workforce management.
3. Lack of transparency to the final end point for connection - what's required to connect at a house, is it going to be possible at all.
4. Installation department disorganised.
5. Extremely unreliable (as dips in signal).
6. Responses are not encouraging for those not signed up.
7. Community engagement officer not all that helpful.

DB outlined that the reason for the village survey was to provide an overview of the infrastructure project in the village. Following these results a formal letter of complaint will be sent to Gigaclear and Ofcom will also be informed of the issues.

It was also noted that Openreach have made it clear they are not planning a project in the village.

**Action:** DB/James Henderson to contact Gigaclear and Ofcom regarding the issues outlined from the village survey.

#### **24.409.7 For Information:** Playing field & playground update (BL)

BL highlighted that the new playground swings were now open and in full use. They were inspected and signed off by RoSPA following inspection on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

JM was thanked again for all his help and support as he was not in attendance at the last meeting.

KJC Cleaning cleaned the playground on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

Ardley FC have been in touch to discuss the renewal of using the playing field again for next season and to introduce a new manager and a meeting will be arranged.

**Action:** BL to arrange a meeting with Ardley FC regarding next season.

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**24.409.8 Resolution: To Approve** Parish Council accounts and reserves statement for Q4 FY 2023-24 (TR)

The Parish Council Q4 accounts for financial year 2023/24 were provided to the Council following their approval by the finance advisory group. A summary of expenditure in Q4 vs budget, bank reconciliation and income details were provided. There was an underspend within general operational aspects of the Council’s work in FY 2023-24 but this has allowed for an increase in reserve funds for larger identified projects. A development meeting is required to move some of the major projects forward.

The reserves statement for the end of FY 2023-24 was also presented which included reserves for playing field, spinney and playground development, oak tree footpath, footpaths, Neighbourhood Plan and traffic. One area of reserves has already been depleted in Q1 with the work on the playground being completed.

The resolution to approve the Parish Council accounts for Q4 FY 2023-24 was proposed by TR and seconded by BL. The motion was supported unanimously by the Council.

**Action:** Clerk to upload the Parish Council Q4 accounts (FY 2023/24) to the Parish Council website.

**Action:** Clerk to send Q4 FY 2023-24 accounts to Henry Donne for independent inspection.

**24.409.9 For Discussion:** Discuss and agree recommendations from the Planning Group on planning applications (SD)

Key planning applications in the planning report were discussed by the Council.

**Building Applications**

**Decisions Received – Permitted**

**24/00306/F – Manor Hotel** - Application to remove existing fountain and replace with turning circle comprising decorative stone urn, hedging, grass border and metal edging.

**24/00291/LB – Manor Hotel** - Partial retrospective application for the removal of several historic windows and replacement of the modern unlawful windows installed, with new windows to match the historic windows.

**24/00567/LB – Manor Hotel** - RETROSPECTIVE - Works to internal staircase.

**24/00441/F – Fir Tree Farm** – Erection of Wood store. Resubmission of 23/03300/F.

**24/00028/F – 20 Westlands Avenue** - Loft extension/conversion including increase to height of roof, and garage conversion with associated internal and external works.

**Decisions Received – Refused**

None

**Withdrawn**

None

**Awaiting Decision**

**23/03383/F – 2 Church Close (discussed Dec 23)**

Two storey side and rear extensions (re-submission of 23/01872/F) **Commented**

**24/00122/F – 22 Milestone Lane** – change of use from agricultural land to residential garden. Retrospective incorporation of 5m of land on the northern boundary of the development site. **Commented**

**24/00497/F – Cruck Cottage** – Resubmission of 23/02717/F **Commented**

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**24/00498/LB – Cruck Cottage** – Resubmission of 23/02717/F

**Commented**

**24/00645/LB – Manor Hotel** - Application to remove existing defective tanking system in coach house basement and replace with new.

**24/00522/LB – Manor Hotel** - Works to repair and replace boundary fencing and gates on the southern and western perimeter of the site.

**24/00804/OUT – Reynards Lodge, North Lane** - Outline Planning Approval for the demolition of workshops, stables and tennis court and erection of three dwellings and conversion of existing building to form a dwelling (renewal of 21/02146/OUT).

**24/00745/CLUE – North View, North Lane** - Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use for Change of Use of existing double width hardstanding on verge directly to front of property to domestic use - hardstanding straddling highways land.

**Commented**

**24/00935/CLUE – Summer Court** – Certificate of Lawfulness – excavated hard standing for parking on the grass verge (now missing from the register).

**Commented**

### **New Applications**

**24/00816/F – Quick Fit Garage, A34 North** - Construction of 4 no EV charging bays with vehicular access and associated crossover from services exit road.

**24/00893/F – Kelberg, Northampton Road** - Proposed erection of 8-bay workshop and associated works.

### **Tree Applications:**

**24/00722/TCA – Westfield Farm Barn** – Removal of trees T1 Conifer, T2 Conifer & T3 Silver Birch. All trees are in close proximity to the existing barn, outbuilding & oil tank and are therefore considered to pose a threat to the structure of these buildings. All trees are large and block significant amounts of natural daylight into these buildings.

**Action:** SD/Clerk to send appropriate planning replies to Cherwell District Council.

**24.409.10 Resolution: To Approve** the following invoices for payment (DB)

DB requested approval of the following invoices detailed in the table below.

PC Ref	Payee	Purpose	Total (incl VAT)	Budget Line	Amount Remaining in 2023-24 Budget
401*	Playdale Playgrounds Ltd	Playground repairs, March 2024 – 50% deposit	£731.05	Village Initiatives/Dev of Playing Field, Spinney & Playground	£9,000.00
402*	Playdale Playgrounds Ltd	Playground repairs, March 2024 – final balance	£806.65	Village Initiatives/Dev of Playing Field, Spinney & Playground	£8,268.95
403*	Playdale Playgrounds Ltd	Playground new swings, March 2024 - 50% deposit	£5,041.84	Village Initiatives/Dev of Playing Field, Spinney & Playground	£7,462.30
404*	Playdale Playgrounds Ltd	Playground new swings, March 2024 - final balance	£4,404.64	Village Initiatives/Dev of Playing Field, Spinney & Playground	£2,420.46
405*	OALC	Training D Bohm - Talking Tables (16/05/24)	£48.00	Staff Costs/Clerk & Councillors Training	£300.00
406*	Oxford Edens	Grass cutting 04/04/24 (playground, stocks/Ben Jonson)	£286.65	Village Works/Village Contractor Grass Cutting	£4,000.00
407	ONPA	Subscription membership 2024-25	£50.00	Subscriptions/Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plans Alliance	£50.00
408	Graham Barnett	Fuel for community van (Jet)	£60.04	Village Works/Community Bus Scheme	£2,000.00
409	Clerk (J Mullane)	Dog poo bags for village supply x8000 (Eco Hound)	£123.60	Village Works/General Village Maintenance	£1,200.00

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410*	KJ Cleaning Solutions	Jet wash cleaning of playground	£216.00	Village Works/General Village Maintenance	£1,076.40
411*	Slade Estate Services Limited	Monthly maintenance of playing field – March	£334.28	Village Works/Playing Field Maintenance	£3,000.00
412	Cherwell District Council	Dog litter bin emptying x5 (summer period)	£308.88	Village Works/Dog Litter Bin Emptying	£1,400.00
413	RoSPA Play Safety	Post installation RoSPA inspection of x2 swing sets	£498.00	Village Initiatives/Dev of Playing Field, Spinney & Playground	-£1,984.18
414	Oxford Edens	Grass cutting 22/04/24 (playground, stocks/Ben Jonson)	£286.65	Village Works/Village Contractor Grass Cutting	£3,713.35
415	Clerk (J Mullane)	Community van MOT test (free) and works (Pete Thirtle)	£26.22	Village Works/Community Bus Scheme	£1,939.96

\*invoices already paid

It was noted that invoices 401-406, 410 and 411 had been paid already to avoid late payment fees. The additional budget required for the playground works would be taken from reserves for the playing field, spinney and playground works collated following the end FY 2023-24.

The resolution to approve the invoices detailed in the table was proposed by DB and seconded by TR. The motion was supported unanimously by the Council.

**Action:** Clerk to update invoice log with approvals.

**Action:** Clerk to initiative request for payments from Councillors and ensure payments authorised.

**24.409.11 For Information:** Oxfordshire County & Cherwell District Councillor updates (Councillor Simpson/Councillors Coton & Nedelcu)

There was nothing to note from CDC Councillors due to absence.

Councillor Simpson commented:

- OCC cabinet meetings spent all time on administration matters leaving no time for motions.
- Working with Enforcement team regarding land adjacent A34 at Sainthill Copse. The team were working on the case via the legal processes and Councillor Simpson will provide an update when its available.
- Councillor Simpson will work on helping to try and progress the Oak Tree footpath removal and is keen to get the new Chief Executive to link in with parishes.

**24.409.12 For Discussion:** Community van scheme update (Graham Barnett)

GB advised the Council that the community van failed its annual MOT test last week on emissions and a problem with the break. JM has taken the van back and a mechanic on his site is looking further at it, the cost is unknown but he is not undertaking any high ticket works. If additional works were required JM would advise the Council before agreeing to them. The community van has served its purpose to the village well, if the van is not fixable it was recommended that an SUV type car would make a good replacement.

The option of offering the community van as a way of transporting the children from Ardley to the playing field was discussed with the volunteer drivers. Unfortunately they did not consider the scheme practical due to the number of seats on offer, it would be out of hours and the volunteer drivers would not be able to commit to the regular trips.

OCC have re-launched their Community Transport grant scheme for 2024/25; the Council will need to investigate if there is a way we can fulfil the criteria and apply for a grant to support the operation of the community van.

**Action:** Council to consider options to apply for OCC Community Transport grant.

**24.409.13 Next Parish Council Meeting Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024, 7.30pm (Chair)

**Meeting Closed:** 21.24

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