

MINUTES of the meeting of Soulbury Parish Council held on Monday, 15 February 2021 at 7.30 p.m held via Zoom due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.

PRESENT: Cllrs Mr V. Wright, Chairman; Mr A. Stevens; Miss W. Taylor; Mrs M. Rowe; Mr. M Cross, Mr J. Day, Mr G. Smith (part-time) and Mr. B. Everitt (part-time) and 12 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mr I. Culley and Mr J. Spires, Clerk to the Parish Council. Cllr Taylor was asked to take the minutes for this meeting.

2. MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2021 were approved by the Council and signed as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING:

There was one matter arising: Anglian Water again attended the area by The Mead to address the foul smell. The problem was located on private land and whilst it was not Anglian Water's responsibility to deal with it, they did clear a bad blockage. They could not guarantee the work and it is not a long term fix. Cllr Wright has done a lot of digging to find someone responsible for the long term and he is currently dealing with the Environment Agency.

4. FINANCE:

The following invoices were approved for payment:

Zoom meeting upgrade fees	£143.88
Buckinghamshire Council, dog bin emptying	£436.22
Leighton Buzzard Observer, advertisement for Parish Clerk	£270.00
British Gas, supply to village hall	£147.39

This seems a lot when the hall is not being used due to Covid restrictions. The bill will be forwarded to Ian Woodland to check once we have established if the bill is read or estimated.

Cllr Taylor raised the need to consider budgeting in order to ensure the precept meets the Council's needs for 2021/2022.

5. PLANNING:

21/00436: Stable block and hay store behind 1-6 Leighton Road, Soulbury
This has only just been added to the Planning Portal so Cllr Wright will forward documentation to all Councillors for discussion at the next full council meeting.

21/00071: Erection of a single storey rear extension at 11 The Green, Soulbury
This application was approved on 8 February, 2021.

Land behind The Boot Public House: the planning application was approved very quickly by an officer not a committee despite objections to the application, it being in a conservation area, the issue of felling a tree without the tree officer's approval in said conservation area and the involvement of district councillors/MPs. A letter of complaint has been sent from the Council via Cllrs Greg Smith and Ben Everitt (whose views are in line with ours). Its receipt has been acknowledged.

Comments from Cllrs Smith and Everitt: our options have been limited as this application has been determined in law. Cllr Smith said that he usually asks for a committee decision in such cases and will check he did that. Planning Dept has decided to make sure small applications are passed in 8 weeks to clear backlog and prevent extended timescales. Planning, at the moment, favours developers and not the 'small guy'. This is being reviewed to address this imbalance.

The first application for two residences was objected to and was withdrawn. However, the second, for one residence, appeared and was determined under the radar. It seems this applications was considered small and easy but at no time does it appear the objection from the community and councillors has been referred to and was passed 'on the nod'. It has also been noted that the comments relating to both applications have disappeared from the portal and it was officially requested that these are reinstated with immediate effect.

Finally, the status of 'village asset' seems to mean nothing. The Council assumed it to mean the building and land. Cllr Smith agreed to check whether it means just the building, ie the public house, or public house and its car park.

Cllrs Smith and Everitt will try to get to the bottom of what happened and ensure our complaint is heard. They will keep the Parish Council informed.

6. ENVIRONMENT:

6.1 Childrens' Playground

A copy of the lease has been sent to all Councillors. It was unanimously agreed to accept it. The cost to Soulbury Council is £500/pa. It is for 25 years with 5 year breaks and is outside the Act. John Spires will be asked to push for completion so we can start applying for funds to equip the playground area.

6.2 Grass Cutting

3 contractors have been asked for quotes; CS Maintenance (£180 fortnightly), RTM Maintenance (£210 + VAT), Heart and Soulbury Gardens (did not quote but as they did the grass cutting last year they came in at around £290/m). CS Maintenance was unanimously approved for this annual contract. Using a contractor means the parish council does not have to buy, maintain, store securely any mowing equipment.

7. REPORTS OF DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS:

Cllr Ben Everitt reported that recent weather brought a lot of flooding with it but council resources coped well. He did point out that they cannot deal with flooding they don't know about so encouraged the use of 'fix my street' on the Buckinghamshire Council website. He also reported that the mobile Covid testing was working well as was the roll out of the vaccination.

8. PARISH HALL:

Nothing to report other than it has been booked for the elections on 6 May 2021. We will ensure it is clean to a good standard but the Council staff will perform any specific Covid sanitation requirements.

9. MILLENNIUM GREEN:

It is waterlogged to the point were we cannot get onto the grass at the moment.

Cllr Stevens pointed out that people have been feeding the horses in fields beside the SMG. This has to stop. Warning signs are attached to fencing. The horses are properly fed and hayed daily and further feeding is inappropriate and can be dangerous.

Cllr Taylor reported that the SMG has received £1,000 donation from Richard Caplan. His mother, Elizabeth, asked him to donate this before she died when the estate had been sorted and this he has done. A huge thank you to Elizabeth Caplan.

10. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

The issue of a hedge being taken out which was over 100 years old was raised. This issue is already with Cllr Greg Smith. It is known who has done it but the main question is who is responsible for policing this. It is illegal to remove such hedging and we need to have

information to hand for future. All the usual departments have been approached but to no avail.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Speed indicator still needs moving. Cllrs Wright and Cross will meet at the location to discuss a new position with a fixing point and postcrete on Sunday (21st).

Cllr Day has cut down one of the cherry trees but the other has telephone wires running through it so needs more equipment to ensure communications stay in tact. It is hoped to have the job complete next weekend (20/21 Feb).

Cllr Taylor asked that everyone reads and approves the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations so she can upload the adopted documents to the website.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] will be presented to the Councillors.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be on 15th March 2021 at 7.30 p.m. via Zoom.

As a result of upgrading the Zoom account, Cllr Wright has been able to book in all parish council meetings to July 2021 using the same link for each and all of them. The link is:

<https://zoom.us/j/92993182042?pwd=TWlweFFxQXNvYnlxMXBDUzB4eUZ3UT09>

Meeting ID: 929 9318 2042
Passcode: 818860

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