

FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL, HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM DUE TO THE ONGOING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ON THE 19TH OCTOBER 2020, IN THE COUNTY OF OXFORDSHIRE AT 7.30PM.

PRESENT: Chairman: Peter Newell
Vice-Chairman: Robert Crocker (from 8.50pm)
Councillors: Mary Ann Canning, Peter Foster, Matthew Ruddle, Véro McCoy, Bill Phillips, Tim Webster.
District Councillors: Marilyn Davies (till 8.35pm)
County Councillor: Liam Walker (from 8.15pm till 8.35pm)
Clerk: Lisa Smith

At the time of this meeting taking place, the UK and rest of the world were still experiencing a Coronavirus (Covid -19) pandemic, and legislation and rules around social distancing were being updated regularly. The current Government advice was to not allow public meetings to take place, but legislation had been changed to allow virtual meetings instead.

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

Two members of the public were present for this session – Kenny Wylie, who wished to listen to the meeting and Simon Brown, who wished to discuss some cricket screens.

A report from Simon Brown was circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting which provided some background to the number of times cricket balls had entered into residents' gardens over the years. In the past 2 seasons, it was estimated that a cricket ball had entered gardens in Blenheim Lane on 4 occasions (2 of which resulted in windows being hit), Wroslyn Road on 2 occasions and in Pigeon House Lane on 2 occasions. This only happened during adult matches, of which there would normally be 22 matches throughout a normal season.

When a cricket ball entered a garden, it would be travelling with considerable force, enough to injure a person or damage property. Whilst the Club was insured against injuries and damage (up to £5m per occasion) it did not prevent the person or property being damaged or cover the emotional impact any injury or damage may cause. During the last season, a cricket ball had entered an elderly resident's garden and hit their patio window, and whilst no damage to the property was caused, the resident did suffer a serious fright to the point that they lost sleep and were afraid to use their garden for fear of being hit by a cricket ball. Simon had visited the resident and apologized on behalf of the Club and was keen to be a good neighbour, whilst not wanting cricket to be banned from the field.

Simon had carried out some research and presented two possible options, either erect a barrier or turn the pitch around. The pitch direction had been set since cricket started in the village and tracked from south-east to north-west. A re-positioning of the direction of play would not reduce the risk of balls entering gardens, and potentially may exacerbate the problem, and could also cause the sun to be facing into the batsmen's eyes, preventing them seeing the ball throughout an innings which would then prevent evening matches taking place.

There were several options for a creating a barrier, which could be either permanent or temporary, but these all involved high posts and fencing, and it was estimated that the height of any fencing would need to be at least 10 metres, and even this would not guarantee a ball being hit over this height.

Some examples of temporary and permanent fencing were provided in the report, together with some approximate costings. It was noted that even with a temporary fencing, it would still require installation of permanent posts. One example showed a heavy-duty retracting boundary safety fencing with netting that could be raised or lowered with a heavy-duty winch pulley attached to the posts. Another example showed a boundary netting and post system with steel ground sockets that could be removed during the winter months. The actual costs would depend on the amount of fencing required. The main perceived risks were the 8 houses along Blenheim Lane, and a fence of 6m high and 60m long, would consist of approx. 12 poles and 360 sq metres of fencing which would cost in the region of £3,500. The Club had already been successful in gaining a grant from the England Cricket Board for pitch renovation and the purchase of a new mower, but their finances wouldn't cover the costs of the fencing without fundraising and trying to get some match funding.

Simon wished to raise this with the Parish Council to see if anything needed to be done. It was noted that consulting with the residents could be problematic, but it was probably necessary to ensure residents thoughts were taken into account.

Decisions needed to be made about how to consult with residents, whether a security type barrier needed to be provided and how any fencing/barrier would be funded.

A suggestion was made of whether WODC could help in providing some sort of assessment and possibly look at grant funding available. It was also suggested contacting OPFA for some advice.

Simon was thanked for attending and left the meeting at 8.00pm.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Alaa al Yousuf.

3. CODE OF CONDUCT:

3.1 TO RECEIVE ANY AMENDMENTS TO THE REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no amendments to the Register of Members' Interests.

3.2 TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM COUNCILLORS FOR MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING

Mary Ann Canning (personal) as a member of Freeland Charitable Foundation.

Robert Crocker (personal) as a member of Freeland Charitable Foundation (FCF) and as having a local business.

Matthew Ruddle (personal) as caretaker of the Little Free Library and as a member of 1st Hanborough/Freeland Scouts Committee.

Tim Webster (personal) as having a local business.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 To approve and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 21st September 2020

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 21st September were approved and would be signed by the Chairman (outside of the meeting) as a true record of those proceedings.

5. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to report.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6.1 Mobile coverage in Freeland – to receive an update on progress to improve mobile signal

There was nothing further to report. A new consultant had now been appointed and there was a strong suggestion from CTIL that the Whitehouse Farm option would be revisited to try and obtain a deal. Peter F would keep the Council updated on any further developments.

6.2 Freeland Methodist Church: To receive an update on future of Methodist Church

There was nothing further to report.

7. PLANNING - Applications received & WODC Decisions plus:

7.1 Applications Received:

20/02423/HHD

89 BROADMARSH LANE, FREELAND.

Erection of single storey rear extension for Ms M Birch.

20/02310/HHD

PIPERS, 163 WROSLYN ROAD, FREELAND.

Partial demolition of existing garage and rear extension and replace with a two-storey side extension for Mr G Bull.

20/02311/LBC

PIPERS, 163 WROSLYN ROAD, FREELAND.

Internal and external alterations to include partial demolition of existing garage and rear extension and replace with a two-storey side extension together with changes to internal layout for Mr G Bull.

After a brief discussion, Council agreed to make no objections to the above applications. However, they did raise concerns regarding the loss of the driveway at Pipers, and so it was agreed to request a

single white line be painted across the driveway of 165/167 Wroslyn Road to ensure their access was maintained.

Action: Clerk to submit comments as above to WODC Planners.

7.2 Applications Approved: None.

7.3 Applications Refused: None.

7.4 Applications Withdrawn: None.

7.5 Applications Awaiting Decision:

20/01734/OUT LAND NORTH OF A40, A40 SECTION FROM BARNARD GATE TO EYNSHAM ROUNDABOUT, EYNSHAM (NEIGHBOURING PARISH)

Outline application with means of access for a mixed-use Garden Village, comprising residential, retail, food and drink, health and community facilities, hotel, class B1, B2 and B8 employment uses, education provision, burial ground, public open space with sports pitches together with ancillary facilities, landscaping and associated infrastructure and works for Grosvenor Developments Ltd.

8. REPORT OF COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL BUSINESS

Merilyn provided a brief update on an afternoon she had spent in Freeland School talking with Year 2 children about litter. She was also looking into the Mears site where work had started up again, so she would speak with the MD about how it was progressing.

In Liam's update he covered a number of items on the agenda relating to Highways, plus he gave an update that roadworks on the A4095 junction with the Mears site were about to commence from 26th October until 7th December. Temporary traffic lights would be in place whilst this access work was carried out. It was reported that Pigeon House Lane had been added to a list for the Highways team to look at regarding signage options to try and deter large HGVs from cutting through and also to reduce the road from a national speed limit road. This would be looked at in due course, so it was agreed in the meantime to remove this item from the agenda.

With regards to the 20mph zones, Liam had asked the Highways team to write to Parish Councils on an ad hoc basis, but data was needed from the speed surveys to back up any case put forward for a 20mph zone. It was likely that traffic calming measures would be required to get something introduced, and it was felt highly likely that the onus would be put back to local councils to provide the funding. As reported last month, a likely cost was around £3k just for the legal introduction of a 20mph traffic order, then there was signage and possible additional line painting on top. As this was not something that would be solved quickly, and the traffic survey data was needed, it was agreed to combine the 20mph zones and traffic speeding, and to remove these item from the agenda and review again in 2-3 months' time.

Merilyn and Liam were both then thanked for attending and both left the meeting at 8.35pm.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS

9.1 Presentation of the monthly financial report

The monthly financial report was presented to the Council showing details of the bank balance at 30th September 2020 and the receipts and payments received or paid out in the last month. The bank statement was checked as agreeing with the figures on the finance sheet and would be signed by Matthew or Bill outside of the meeting. Following on from last month, the shed expenditure had been transferred from the playing field budget to the cost code 814 – S106 funds.

9.2 Annual audit – To receive an update on progress

The Clerk gave a brief update on the audit. All information had been submitted to the external audit provider and the outcome was still awaited.

9.3 Online banking – to receive an update on changing bank account from Barclays to Unity Trust Bank

The Clerk had started the process of transferring the PC bank account to the Unity Trust bank. The new account had now been opened and the Clerk was currently getting the bank mandate forms

signed to officially close the account and switch everything to Unity. A bank transfer date of 1st January 2021 was initially agreed to allow time for direct debits and a refund from NEST that was due to be paid.

9.4 Approval of invoices for payment

The Council approved invoices for payment as listed on the invoices for payment sheet distributed with the meeting. Council therefore **resolved** to approve all of the following invoices for payment:

The following invoices are requested to be approved for payment:			
Cheque Number	To whom paid	Details	Amount (£)
102662	Bill Phillips	Litter picking July - September 2020	250.00
102663	AC Jackson Ltd	New storage shed on field - 2nd payment	8,652.00
102664	Lisa Smith	Clerk's salary - October	1,061.45
102665	Vero McCoy	Refund - food bank items	69.36
		Total:	10,032.81
Plus:			
	New NEST pension payment of £42.40 (employee & employer contributions). The new amount of £24.23 has been deducted from Clerk's salary for September salary payment. Back pay of £132.90 awarded in October salary, hence amount higher than normal.		

9.5 Review of VAT reclaim

The VAT reclaims for Quarters 1 and 2 were reviewed and accepted by the Council.

9.6 Any other financial business – Councillors were reminded that the budget setting meeting in November was fast approaching so they were encouraged to start considering anything they may wish to bring up which may need funds put aside in the Precept at the November meeting.

10. PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ITEMS

10.1 Play areas/Playing Field – to receive any reports:

10.1.1 Play area reports – field gates on Pigeon House Lane and Blenheim Lane entrances did not close automatically; barbed wire in hedge behind zip wire; to update on trampoline tile gluing and replacing the back panel of one of the wooden benches

Robert had the pink book and there were no problems to report, he would pass it on to Mary Ann.

The field gates that were not closing automatically had been sorted by changing the spring.

The barbed wire in the hedge behind the zip wire was still to be removed. It was noted the whole area from Blenheim Lane to Pigeon House Lane needed sorting as a separate project and so it was agreed to add this to next month's agenda.

The trampoline tile had not been glued and Mary Ann had written to the supplier to request this work be done at the same time as the back panel of the wooden benches – she would give him another reminder to ensure this got done.

It was also noted the hand sanitiser bottle had been removed again and needed replacing. The Clerk would arrange this.

Action: Robert to speak to Arthur re removing barbed wire, Mary Ann to liaise with supplier re bench panel and trampoline tile. Clerk to add hedge behind zip wire project to next agenda.

10.1.2 New storage building on field – to update on progress on installation of new shed

Robert gave an update. The new shed had been built and was now waiting to have the concrete floor installed. Robert advised he could provide the materials for the concrete floor, which would be approx. 20 tons of hardcore to get 6 inches of concrete, costing in the region of £3K. This was agreed. It was suggested asking a local contractor to see if they could lay the concrete, with Robert overseeing the work. The Clerk would contact a local contractor to see if they could do the work.

It was also noted that the pedestrian access gate at the bottom end of Blenheim Lane was now blocked with the new shed, and so it was suggested moving the path sideways near the sycamore tree and moving the existing gate a bit further north towards Little Blenheim. Robert and Mary Ann would take a look and see how it could be done.

Action: Robert and Mary Ann to look at moving path and access gate as above, and Clerk to speak to local contractor re concreting work.

10.1.3 Replacement of Hornbeam trees on the playing field – to update on replacement of the dead Hornbeam trees on the playing field

All 3 replacement trees were healthy and being regularly watered and looked after by Robert, and they would be planted when weather conditions allowed, hopefully very soon.

Action: Robert to replace Hornbeam trees on field.

10.1.4 Water for cricket square – to consider quote received from Thames Water in relation to a proposal to investigate adding a water supply to the new storage shed to enable sports clubs to use their own water supply

The Clerk had contacted Thames Water to investigate costs for a possible water supply. The quote had been received and stated the cost would be £3,340 + VAT to connect to the water supply in Pigeon House Lane. Council had concerns about the costs being so expensive and considered having a couple of water butts instead that could provide water. It was also suggested finding out where the metered pipe was located for the cricket square that the Club used in the summer.

10.1.7 Cricket pitch screens – to discuss a suggestion of purchasing some sort of screening to protect houses from cricket balls during the cricket season

Following on from Simon's report, it was noted that raising this issue with the residents may cause people to be more concerned about something that they were not concerned about already. Council agreed initially to contact OPFA for some advice and guidance. The Clerk would make contact.

Action: Clerk to contact OPFA for advice.

10.2 Village Highway Matters – to receive any reports

10.2.1 Highways reports: None.

10.2.2 Parking near the Church – to discuss any response from Witney Town Charity re suggestion of leasing their field as a temporary car park and planting trees on their land

The Clerk had chased this up again this month and a response had finally been received. Savills advised that at the moment they were not able to provide a formal response as the developer was in dialogue with the Local Authority. They therefore could not make even a temporary commitment until timescales for progressing with an application were bottomed out with the Council. As it was felt this was not making any progress, it was agreed to remove this item from the agenda.

10.2.4 Pigeon House Lane – to receive an update on improving signage to stop HGVs driving down this lane and to reduce the speed limit

This had been covered in Liam's update in item 8 and would be removed from the agenda.

10.2.5 20mph zones – to receive an update on whether this would be feasible to have certain 20mph zones in the village

This had been covered in Liam's update in item 8 and would be removed from the agenda and reviewed again in 2-3 months' time.

10.2.6 Traffic/speeding in Freeland – to discuss associated costs in carrying out the traffic survey and to decide when best to carry this out

The Clerk had contacted Highways to obtain an exact costing for the black boxes and the information received had been circulated to Councillors. A map would need to be provided to Highways to show survey location points which could be checked for suitability. There was an approximate cost of £200 + VAT per survey, but there were discounts for multiple survey locations which could bring the price down to around £150 + VAT per survey. A tube survey would be used which would provide speed/class/flow in both directions and run for 7 days, after which the survey results would be supplied within 10 working days of the survey's completion. Normally surveys could be booked in within 2 weeks of confirming a survey. It was agreed that it was not a great time to carry out the survey as lots of people were still working from home so a true picture would not be gained. It was agreed to wait 2-3 months and review the situation again.

10.2.7 Traffic calming measures – to receive any update from Traffic Calming Working Group on how to make it less attractive for cars to use Freeland as a cut through, and actually use the new priority road

The Traffic Calming Group were due to meet on 26th October, after which it was hoped to have something to report.

10.2.8 Freeland Speedwatch – to receive an update on when Speedwatch activities can resume

Speedwatch activities were still on hold but it was hoped they would be able to resume in the near future.

10.3 Footpath & Bridleway matters/Footpath Book – to receive any reports: gate off hinges on FP6; blocked footpath in Broadmarsh Woods; overhanging trees on Broadmarsh Lane footpath

The gate on FP6 was off the hinges - Robert would take a look. Robert had the footpath book and would pass it to Vero. The blocked footpath at the back of the houses in Broadmarsh Woods had been reported to Savills who managed the area on behalf of Eynsham Park Estate. The overhanging trees on the Broadmarsh Lane footpath were apparently privately owned so the Clerk would try and make contact with the owners.

Action: Robert to pass book to Vero and check gate on FP6.

10.4 Garden of Remembrance – to receive any reports

No reports had been received.

10.4.1 To receive an update on the outstanding archway work

The new struts had been installed on the archway and Council wished to pass on their thanks to Russ Canning for carrying out this work.

10.4.3 To receive an update on progress of maintenance work required at the GOR and on the GOR gates

Tim had a list of the jobs that needed doing and some work had been carried out already (the extra gravel on the path and the seeding in front of the hedge had both been done). He was going to try and get up there in the next week or so to finish off. Some leaf clearance work would also be required.

As reported last month the GOR gates needed some attention, mainly painting and the top bar was rotten although still felt to be ok. Robert advised he had another set of gates which (if they fitted) might be used instead of the existing gates. The existing gates had been measured and were 12'8", but the aperture also needed measuring.

Robert would take a look and liaise with Mary Ann or the GOR Working Group.

Action: Tim to carry out various jobs as above at GOR, Robert to look at alternative gates.

10.5 Freeland Hall Management Committee – to receive any reports

There was nothing much to report. The lighting of the Christmas Tree event would not be able to go ahead as usual due to the ongoing pandemic. However, it was hoped to get the whole village involved in switching on their Christmas lights at the same time. The Football Club had asked if they could resume using the changing rooms which had been agreed.

10.6 Village Pond – to update on getting quote for maintenance work, especially bulrush removal

Tim had taken a look at the pond and whilst some bulrushes did need removing, it was suggested leaving it for the current time and reviewing again in the Spring. This was agreed.

10.7 Amenity Area – to note resident's concerns regarding 2 x oak trees in amenity area and to review reinstatement of ground works following fence installation at nearby property

A resident from Broadmarsh Lane had reported concerns about 2 large oak trees that were situated in the amenity area that were adjacent to the front gate of 46 Broadmarsh Lane.

They had expressed concern about the way they swayed in the recent high winds especially as they were currently in full leaf with rain water on them.

They wanted to ensure the as far as possible that the trees were safe. They were concerned because they believed if the nearest tree came down towards their property it was big enough to possibly cause damage. They did not wish to see the tree removed, but they suggested maybe (and if necessary) some surgery could be done to lower the risk.

Council noted these concerns and agreed to ask a local contractor to carry out a tree survey. The Clerk would arrange this.

A report regarding some possible maintenance work at the amenity area had been circulated to Council prior to the meeting. The report suggested asking for the boundary line to be reinstated so that a native hedging could be planted. It was also suggested possibly having some wild flower seeds sown and maybe some additional trees planted. Tim advised that he was happy to carry out some tidying up on the land to make it presentable, and it was agreed to write to the residents of the new house to ask for the boundary fence to be reinstated. Mary Ann would have a think about tree planting and hedge planting suggestions and who could do the work and report back next month.

Action: Clerk to arrange tree survey as above, Tim to tidy amenity area, Mary Ann to think about further work and Clerk to write to residents re boundary fence.

10.8 PC Noticeboard – to discuss a request to change the lock and back board on the PC notice board on the corner of Parklands

The Clerk had asked whether it would be possible to have the lock changed on the current PC noticeboard on the corner of Parklands and to change the back board as it was extremely difficult to get pins to attach to it. During the winter months the lock became really stiff to use as the wood around it swelled in the damp weather. It was noted that this notice board was rarely looked at by residents as the open style one on the opposite side of the road was used more frequently. It was therefore agreed that the Parklands PC noticeboard was redundant and no longer required and it was agreed to ask a local contractor to remove it.

Action: Clerk to ask local contractor to remove and dispose of notice board.

11. CORRESPONDENCE – To discuss and agree any actions arising from:

(a) OALC September update – details had been emailed around.

(b) Fibre to the Premises Broadband – to discuss an approach from Gigaclear re broadband rollout in Freeland – details had been emailed around. Freeland already had Fibre to the Cabinet, and it was not clear if Freeland could be part of the Government funded scheme to benefit from the Fibre to the Premises - this was apparently being checked by Gigaclear. A number of residents had contacted the Clerk raising concerns about letters they had received from Gigaclear about them possibly digging up their land. A notice had been erected on The Green, plus there were also notices in Nash Lane and Broadmarsh Lane. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to Gigaclear to find out their intentions with land at The Green, and if residents were interested in having Fibre to the Premises installed they should be encouraged to contact Gigaclear directly to find out costs etc.

Action: Clerk to write to Gigaclear re The Green as above.

12. CIRCULATION

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, no circulations were currently being circulated.

13. TO RECEIVE A MONTHLY UPDATE REGARDING FREELAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Clerk gave a brief update. A Harvest service had been held remotely via Zoom. All children had been set up with Google Classroom in case of another lockdown, and the school vision was due to be launched on Thursday 22nd October.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – FOR PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ONLY

North boundary of playing field – it was suggested this area needed some attention and could be carried out as a project – it was agreed to add this to the next agenda for discussion.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Until the regulations changed about public meetings, the next meeting of the Council would be held remotely via Zoom on **Monday 16th November at 7.30pm** (budget setting meeting).

There being no other business the meeting closed at 10.12pm.