



Acting Clerk to The Parish Council: Louisa Freeman

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Cllrs Present:

Cllr. Piers Storey

Cllr. Louisa Freeman Chair

Cllr Tony Coard

Cllr Miranda Armstrong

Cllr Carol Turner

Cllr. Jessica Copcutt – (SW Rep)

Parish Clerk: Louisa Freeman

Members of the public: Many

The Clerk announced that the meeting will be recorded, and the recording will be deleted once the minutes are approved in the next meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Tweedie and from Clive Hooker.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

There were no matter arising from the previous meeting and the minutes from 8 January 2024 were approved and signed.

4. OPEN FORUM

Charlotte Chrimes introduced herself as one of the new co-chairs for Chaddlworth and GS PTFA, having just been appointed to the role with Kathryn Stockwell. Charlotte advised that their first endeavour has been to raise funds to pay for a First Aid skills course for every child in the school. The aim is to empower the children with the confidence to take care of themselves, their friends, families, and others in the community. The cost for training is approximately £4 per child and £297 in total is needed. £132 has already been raised, and the PTFA are therefore asking for support beyond the school community. Charlotte also advised that they will also be approaching Chaddlworth parish council as there are approximately 30 children at the school who live within their confines. The Council voted unanimously to support the PTFA and make up the shortfall of £165. The Chair of the meeting asked what would happen to any surplus funds should Chaddlworth also support the venture. Charlotte reported that looking ahead, they are wishing to run a summer fete. Cllr Storey has been in touch with the PTFA regarding advertising of events on our new website. Cllr Storey is

keen to promote any school events with the wider community in order to pool resources and work together as well as to consider events with a longer lead time. Charlotte advised that the summer fete garners a lot of support and indeed, 2 years ago the school celebrated their 40th anniversary at their 'new' site, and this was a very well attended event with former pupils, as well as village interest, including old photographs etc etc.

Action: PTFA to confirm the exact date of the proposed Summer Fete.

Action: PTFA to liaise with Cllr Storey/Cllr Turner over the Fete.

Action: PTFA to advise where funds should be directed.

Representation was made by a resident, Matt Frayne who enquired as to how long Thames Water tankers would be in the village to support those who have been affected by the current groundwater levels. Mr Frayne expressed his frustration with the way that TW have handled the current situation. The Chair asked if Mr Frayne was prepared to wait until later in the meeting (Item x) when she would be able to update further on matters concerning this issue.

5. PLANNING

Cllr Copcutt advised that all applications listed on the agenda had been processed.

Decision notice – FAS granted, with a large number of conditions attached. No date has been set for commencement of works on account of current groundwater levels. Linda Bowden advised that Steve Ackrill's involvement in the FAS is that he remains a trustee of the fundraising charity committee (with Ray Plowman). Mr Ackrill had historically indicated that the FAS charity would release no funds to the project until work starts.

Linda Bowden (as GS Floor Warden) suggested that the Environment Agency stand out as being the one organisation who have been helpful over the past 3 months in direct contrast with WBC and Thames Water. Linda confirmed that Howard Woollaston is Chair of the Flood Forum, and Nick Voysey represents GS on that Forum.

6. FINANCE

Cllr Armstrong advised that she has been in contact with SSE and she now has access to our account and all paper bills are being sent to her home address. Cllr Coard had previously enquired as to whether SSE have implemented the newly contracted prices across our account that he had negotiated. Cllr Armstrong advised that current charges run at approximately £200 per month and Cllr Coard did not believe that this was the new arrangement following his conversations with him last year.

Action: Clerk to provide details to RFO Cllr Armstrong to look into this further.

All payments this month have been made and the Clerk advised that WBC have credited one invoice. Our VAT return has been submitted.

The clerk advised that she has been in comms with the PCC regarding our decision at the last meeting to donate £1000 to support maintenance and restoration work at St Marys. The council have asked the church to provide further details regarding any efforts to restore the vandalised stained glass windows. Cllr Storey also advised that he has added details to the events page on the website concerning Church café mornings, and Church grounds clearing days.

Action: Clerk to provide details of Treasurer to Cllr Armstrong to pursue.

The Clerk also advised that she has contacted Barclays bank to recover the funds from the closed Community Account.

7. WEBSITE UPDATE

Cllr Storey gave a brief update on the website, including communications with the Social Club. We are now promoting their activities including wellbeing evenings. Cllr Storey is seeing more and more engagement from all groups across the village. Traffic across the website is running approx. 400-450 per month, and as more groups provide data interest has grown.

The Clerk enquired as to how we will communicate that the website is a good rich source of information. Cllr Storey would like to ensure that the website is absolutely bang up to date before this happens. Cllr Turner confirmed that the school will put details in their next newsletter which a little more time and Cllr Copcutt has produced some flyers to go in school bags. It was agreed that these leaflets just needed to be black and white for book bags – and colour for any posters.

Linda Bowden challenged Cllr Storey around the contact sheet that she had been provided which should list either those residents who wish to sign up to the newsletter, or those who have made enquiries about the allotments. Linda felt that the information she had been given was of no use.

Cllr Storey explained that there are two ways of making contact via the website, one is via a Contact Us form (in which messages can be left) and the other is a 'sign up' option to the newsletter. Cllr Storey went on to explain that the list that Linda had been given was an unfiltered list which – perhaps unfortunately – also included those who had not necessarily asked to sign up to the newsletter. Cllr Storey agreed that he might be able to filter the list so that it did not produce information surplus to requirement.

Cllr Storey also assured the meeting that if a particular message is received via the website, (perhaps to do with village issues), then those enquiries are dealt with, on average, within 2-3 working days. The Clerk thanked Cllr Storey for attending to these enquiries. The clerk also requested a meeting with Cllr Storey to look at sharing the administrative burdens and looking at who has responsibility for answering any questions and contacts posed via the website. **Action:** Clerk to propose meeting concerning this issue.

8. VILLAGE ISSUES

a. The clerk circulated tender comparison details for the grounds maintenance contract from 3 x different suppliers, Scofell, tactical FM and Nolls. Scofell are GS current contractor. The clerk had tried to show the information in a format which compared prices as closely as possible. It was noted that Tactical FM have also quoted for removal of dog waste management as well.

Henry Matthews - a director of Tactical - introduced himself to the meeting. Henry gave some background to the history of his company and their growth into commercial grounds management as well as plans to grow waste management services. Henry assured the meeting of the quality of waste services which are also being offered at a cost effective rate and as they are already passing through the parish and therefore it is more environmentally focused. Henry confirmed that a mulching mower would be used to cut the grass. Henry also assured the meeting that he that is personally responsible for supervision and the office would be the point of contact. He also offered a 3 month trial phase to the Council. Henry mentioned other parish councils which they service including Kintbury Parish Council, East Garston Parish Council, Shaw-cum-Donnington Parish Council and many others.

It was unanimously agreed by the Council to appoint Tactical FM as our new grounds maintenance contractor and waste management agent for the year.

Action: clerk to advise Scofell

Action; Clerk to advise WBC that the dog waste contract has been awarded to Tactical

Action: Clerk to confirm commencement date of contract, and to recover bin keys and hand over. The clerk wished to convey her thanks to Henry Matthews for attending the meeting and for provision of clear communications.

b. Speed awareness and traffic update

The clerk reported a request by a resident in Woodlands St. Mary who wished to understand how to go about evaluating potential for the addition of a roundabout to ease the flow of traffic at the intersection of the A338 and B4000 at Shefford Woodlands, close to the Pheasant pub.

The resident takes his daughter to her bus stop in Great Shefford which means taking the B4000 eastbound and turning left onto the A338. He reports that four-out-of-five mornings, traffic is tailed-back beyond the Pheasant Pub and the delays have resulted in them missing the bus on several occasions despite setting off at a reasonable time. This is compounded by the all-too frequent incidents on the M4. When the M4 is closed or busy, the pressure on the B4000 as an alternative route J14-J15 is severe.

It was noted by the clerk that this particular junction comes under the jurisdiction of GS PC even though it would be unlikely that any HS resident would be approaching the junction from that direction at that time. The clerk has responded to the request and has advised that we have been trying to find solutions to other traffic issues directly related to the village but that she recognised the issue here. Whether a roundabout would help (or is even feasible given the current road layout) would need further investigation together with Highways.

Speed awareness- action: Cllr Tweedie is driving this forward - **Action:** Cllr Copcutt will collect speed awareness equipment from Linda later this week.

c. Flooding Issues

Linda Bowden gave an introduction on the Lambourn Valley Flood forum which has been running since 2014 with representatives from villages in the valley down to Newbury as well as representation from EA and TW. A Director of TW attended the last virtual meeting, although Linda expressed cynicism over his attendance, noting that she felt it had made no difference. It is well known that when problems with sewage are raised via the 'Raise a complaint' system, TW subsequently issue messages to say that the issue has been dealt with and closed. Matt Frayne, resident, expressed his own frustration with the ineffectiveness of TW and asked what more could be done. Cllr Freeman assured Mr Frayne that the Parish Council were taking the situation very seriously and would do everything in their power to tackle TW.

Cllr Freeman reported that she had met with the Chairs of Lambourn and East Garston together with Martyn Wright in order to try and find a way to join forces and tackle sewage issues with TW. A statement would be going out shortly (subsequent to the meeting the following statement was issued).

"It is well known that there are significant problems with sewage throughout the Lambourn Valley. The villages of Great Shefford, East Garston, Eastbury, Lambourn and Upper Lambourn, (for ease of description, the Upper Lambourn Valley) all suffer from sewer flooding by groundwater infiltration, and all are in the catchment of the East Shefford Sewage Treatment Works. Thames Water treat this catchment as a discreet area with its own Groundwater Management Plan.

Many people, for many years, have been trying to tackle Thames Water in an attempt to bring about some improvement. The Lambourn Valley Flood Forum has been making strong representation, however, as the name suggests, the LVFF's main focus has been on flooding issues. It is now felt that a more concentrated and co-ordinated effort is needed to resolve sewage problems in our specific part of the Valley that ties in with TW's East Shefford STW Management Plan.

The Chairs of the Parish Councils of Great Shefford, East Garston, and Eastbury, Lambourn and Upper Lambourn, have come together to form a Sewage Action Group for the Upper Lambourn Valley. Our prime objective is to secure clear sewers and a clean river, and our prime target is Thames Water.

Martyn Wright of the EG Flood & Pollution Forum has agreed to chair the group, and we will also be supported by our District Councillors, Clive Hooker and Howard Wollaston. We will be inviting a small number of committed individuals, with specific knowledge and experience from each parish, to join the group to gather evidence of sewage problems, in order to present the strongest possible case to TW, the Environment Agency and other relevant organisations.

There are no quick fixes and we have to be realistic in what we can, and cannot, achieve with TW in such a precarious financial state, however, we are determined to try!

We will keep you updated, and seek your feedback, as the campaign develops."

In this regard, Cllr Freeman asked Linda if she would be so kind as to collate and forward all information and data that she has gathered from residents to date around the issue of sewage which would be helpful to Cllr Freeman to gather and present a case to TW.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Linda to provide information with written documentation that she has to date. Clerk to work with Martyn Wright to ensure information is relevant to the working group.

9. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM AND FLOOD UPDATE

Linda Bowden advised that she has updated the most recent schedule. Some sandbags have been distributed but there are still many available and with groundwater levels currently very high, we may need those in the coming days/weeks.

If there was sand left over from the purchase made in January 2024, Linda was confident that she would be able to sell the sand.

10. COUNCILLORS BUSINESS

The clerk distributed a Declaration of Interest Form which needed to be signed and submitted to WBC by councillors.

Cllr Tweedie had enquired whether there might be appetite for a village community litter pick and it was agreed that this was a good initiative. Henry Matthews advised that he would be able to assist in the removal of waste following a litter pick.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Cllr Tweedie over organisation of this.

The Clerk also advised the meeting that following further discussions with the CIL team at WBC, together with the explanation provided by Ian Herrington detailing the fact that the proposed provision will support the development of the club and potentially the forming of new teams within

the club, they have confirmed that contributing to their fundraising efforts for new nets with CIL money the Parish Council received is justified in this case. The clerk recirculated the information provided by Ian which details that at present there is a £11000 shortfall. The Clerk asked the Council for their thoughts. Cllr Coard reminded the meeting that a previous point had been raised concerning the fact that the club lies outside the Parish, although it was also noted that the Cricket club supports residents within the village. After consideration, the Council felt that it would be prudent to ask Ian to demonstrate that he had approached other village Councils to see if they would support the venture, and perhaps some of the fundraising burden could then be shared between various Councils, so that a small proportion might be shouldered by each Council.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Ian H and revert.

The issue of the football nets in the playground was also discussed and the need for these to be replaced.

Action: Clerk to check with CIL whether new football nets could be purchased under CIL conditions. Charlotte Chrimes advised that the picnic bench in the playground has recently been the subject of vandalism, and is sadly now resident in a tree. It was suggested that a heavy composite bench which could be bolted down might be a better replacement. Henry Matthews offered to take delivery of such a bench and install.

Action: Clerk to check with CIL whether a new bench might also qualify under CIL specifications as a permanent fixture.

The Clerk advised that she will approach a former handyman (Mark Charman) who has undertaken work for us in the past, for a quotation for some small repairs around the village.

The subject of the empty and closed pub was discussed and the fact that the alarm has been ringing recently. It has been reported by several residents including Cllr Armstrong. Cllr Armstrong advised that there has been a burst water pipe which has led to flooding in the pub. An open day which was scheduled for Thursday 1 March has had to be postponed. Cllr Armstrong also reported (via the agent) that there are apparently 3 interested tenant parties.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

The clerk advised that the next meeting should be Monday 6 May 2024, but as that is a bank holiday, she proposed the date of Monday 13 May in the Great Shefford Village Hall. This will also be the date of the next Annual Parish Meeting, so it was agreed that the meeting should perhaps commence at 7.15pm (as soon as yoga is finished).

Action: Clerk to liaise with village hall and confirm date and time.