

STONESFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES 2020/08

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 5th August 2020 via Zoom – Covid 19

Meeting commenced at 19:00

Members present: Cllr David Brown (Chair), Cllr David Baldwin, Cllr W Gould, Cllr Mick Heduan, Cllr Phil McArdeil, Cllr Geraldine Lawrence, Cllr Simon Powell, Cllr Richard Bishop (DC), Cllr Ian Hudspeth (OCC), Cllr Jim O'Brien

Others present: Karen East (Clerk),

Apologies: None

Members of Public: 8 members of public

260. Declarations of pecuniary interest. Cllr D Baldwin declared an interest with regards to Stonesfield Mutual Aid

261. The Minutes of the meeting held on July 2020 were approved.

262. Matters Arising from the minutes July 2020

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is a charge on redevelopments (housing). Consultation is between 10th July and 21st August. The Parish Council will submit a formal response, councillors should send comments to the clerk for collation via email. The clerk reminds councillors to comment by Monday 10th August 2020 to the clerk.

263. Public Participation

Question from Simon Warr: Stockey Woods – if proposal is for it to be turned in to a village green, how would that be maintained? Council confirmed that making changing status to a village green does not change the ownership at all. Blenheim Palace would manage and maintain it, no liability to the parish at all as far as we understand.

264. White Horse Community Pub (Guests: Simon Warr and Steve Callaghan)

A community steering committee has been set up. Approx. 20 people working on various aspects of the group. The six-month moratorium has been triggered and the expression of interest.

Pledges are coming in, White Horse Wombles are selling things, t-shirts etc. are being sold. A website has been set up, Facebook social media has been set up with approx. 350 followers on it. A survey of the village is in place with 267 responses so far (90 are willing to make a donation so far, 84 are willing to make a reward based investment, 40 are prepared to make a profit share). The minimum amount pledged is 121k. This is an encouraging start. They explained that it is possible for a District Council to make a compulsory purchase of a pub if its felt the pub is going in to a state of disrepair which is interesting.

The asking price needs to be raised 395k, a building survey needs to be done early on along with calculating refurbishment costs. The group plan to raise more than the asking price so that the pub can be improved.

Due diligence is taking place now, they have found 15 pubs owned by community pubs and have contacted them to fact find. This is ongoing.

The structure of the company will change to community benefit society if possible. The vision for the pub has been looked at (e.g. pub open all day if possible for a café option, good food at a good price). The survey closes on 16th August, the group would like to launch the share campaign in September. They would like to make a submission mid-November with money in place by end October.

Councillors asked more about the fundraising model and share process etc. Simon Warr explained this.

The clerk confirmed that 53 emails have been received by council from members of the public supporting the pub.

265. Planning

APPLICATION NO: 20/01683/FUL

PROPOSAL: Erect 3-metre-high ball proof chain link fence along boundaries marked red on

accompanying site plan

Town and Country Planning Act

LOCATION: North Farm Woodstock Road Stonesfield

APPLICANT: Stonesfield Parish Council

REGISTERED: 3rd July 2020

The council has no objection to this planning application.

APPLICATION NO: 20/01924/FUL

PROPOSAL: Extension to workshop (revisions to permission 20/00098/FUL)

Town and Country Planning Act

APPLICATION NO: 20/00098/FUL

PROPOSAL: Extension to workshop

Town and Country Planning Act

LOCATION: Stonesfield Garage The Ridings Stonesfield

APPLICANT: C/O Agent

REGISTERED: 3rd July 2020

This application is in or affecting the Stonesfield Conservation Area.

The council has no objections to this planning application.

266. Stockey Woods (Guest: Richard Morris)

In 2016 Blenheim Estate posted notices saying there were no other rights of way on Stockey Bottom apart from one definitive paths. There are actually several paths and people have walked over the woods for generations. There was no consultation when this was posted originally.

A group of villagers got together and it was decided that the route forward was to apply for village green status which would enable the parish of Stonesfield to enjoy the same access that they had for decades to continue. (Blenheim ownership would retain and they would carry out the maintenance etc.). Blenheim have now objected to the application with no viable reason. There has been no discussion, the formal objection has gone straight to solicitors. The group would like to go to the enquiry

and make a case. There is a pre-enquiry which will happen in September. Expert legal advice is needed. This will cost a day for an expert in village green matters (£1,800). This expert advice would allow representation of the case at the pre-enquiry. Since the Slate published about this Blenheim has made contact for a meeting. This meeting will take place on 11 August. Richard Morris and Cllr D Brown will attend the meeting with Blenheim representatives. Councillors expressed that access to this area is an asset to the village and in light of Covid 19 the outdoor space is needed. It is hoped that the discussion with Blenheim will prevent a legal process.

267. Stonesfield Mutual Aid

Stonesfield Mutual Aid – Cllr Baldwin advised that parcels will stop on Aug 28th. There are still people on furlough and the group remains willing to help people. Some people have been granted shopping vouchers and some people have been put in touch with other groups (e.g. housing) as needed. If there is another wave the remaining money held by Stonesfield Mutual Aid would not last long. Stonesfield Mutual Aid are grateful to all those who donated time or money to support the group and remain willing to help people if needed although things are generally paused until things become clearer.

If needed the group may have to come back to the request from the parish for further money.

The Stonesfield Mutual Aid group would need to submit a new full grant application to the Parish Council for this to be considered.

268. Finance

Councillors **RESOLVED** to approve the cheque payments as detailed in the clerk's report (presented below).

Written and issued following July approvals.

Rob Atkinson	£ 60.00	102151	maintenance - remove post
Stonesfield Playing Field Association	£ 245.00	102152	Grant - hand sanitizer
Clive Parsons	£ 90.18	102153	PAYE

Newly issued.

Clerk - PAYE	£ Confidential	102154	PAYE
Clerk expenses	£ 51.38	102155	envelopes, home office etc.
Oxfordshire County Council Pensions	£ 302.15	102156	
HMRC -PAYE	£ Confidential	102157	
West Oxfordshire District Council	£ 704.23	102158	Grass Cutting June 20
OALC	£ 36.00	102159	Chairman's course
Vision ICT	£ 21.60	102160	Addtl email ID for Cllr Gould

Cllr P McArdell checked the bank reconciliation in detail and it was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank reconciliation.

To consider the grant requests received:

A grant form was received towards legal services regarding **Stockey Woods** for the sum £1,800. This equates to £1,500 plus VAT. Accounts from SUSTO were provided to support the grant application. This was circulated to councillors ahead of the meeting.

Cllr J O'Brien proposed the grant application, Cllr S Powell seconded it. Councillors voted unanimously in favour of granting the money for the full amount. It was **RESOLVED** to provide the whole grant award towards the Stockey Woods legal expenses. **This grant will only be issued if required following the Blenheim Estate meeting on 11th August.**

A grant form was received from the **White Horse Community Pub Group**. The form detailed what the group needed to spend as part of the bid - £11,750 with a request of a grant from the Parish Council of £4,000 towards this spend requirement. No supporting accounts were provided. (Details were sent to Councillors ahead of the meeting). The application detailed examples of grants from other parish councils in similar circumstances to SPC but it was noted by Cllr D Brown that they were far larger than us as a parish council and should not be used as a direct comparison. The application generated much discussion.

Cllr J O'Brien asked if there is a covenant on the pub from the existing owner which would mean that if sold they would need a payment made to them. The community pub group confirmed that this is unknown at the moment.

Cllr J O'Brien asked if anyone had 400k would they buy the White Horse as a viable business? Cllr Baldwin confirmed that the two business models the group are talking about are community ownership groups.

Cllr J O'Brien expressed concern regarding the Covid 19 situation and the pub. He asked what happens if the pub value goes down or is not viable? Cllr D Baldwin responded that property is always a good long term investment.

Cllr D Brown requested that a business case would have been better and invited Simon Warr and Steve Callaghan to make further comment if they wished.

Cllr P McArdell suggested councillors make a decision on how much money they can give right now to support the group, he suggested to give £2,000 now with a further £2,000 next month once the group has a more proposed structure and detail of funds. Cllr W Gould supported this proposal.

Claire Brooks (Community Pub group) advised that she is convinced that the pub is viable and explained her reasoning for this. (But did not provide accounting evidence).

Simon Warr advised in the comment box of the virtual meeting that they are not asking the Parish Council to invest in the pub. Peter Smyth in the comment box noted that 116 community pubs have been opened under the Plunkett model since 2003 and that none have failed. He also added that the steering group have *pledged* £2,750 funds from their members themselves.

Cllr D Brown reiterated that the Parish Council does support the Community Pub but any money for this is above the precept and will come from unallocated

reserves. The clerk / RFO backed this statement up and confirmed that no other Parish Council in the region that we can find has given money towards their community pubs.

Cllr P McArdell explained that the Parish Council has been living beyond its means for some time. The Covid 19 emergency grant fund came from the unallocated reserves. Cllr P McArdell confirmed that the Parish Council reserves are reduced to the bare minimum that we should allow (15k). Our concern is that once the money is gone we cannot overspend and we cannot keep increasing the precept.

Cllr W Gould reminded Councillors that this is not our money but still supports a 4k grant given in two tranches. Cllr S Powell supports a 4k grant provided in two tranches. Cllr J O'Brien supports a donation of 2k maximum. Cllr M Heduan supports a grant of 4k given in two tranches. Cllr G Lawrence supports a grant of 4k. Cllr P McArdell supported a 4k grant given in two tranches, Cllr D Brown supported a maximum of 2k.

The Clerk / RFO reminded Councillors that this is a lot of money and we have not seen a set of accounts or a bank account yet for the group which is a requirement of a grant application. Council were reminded that this is a councillor decision but they must know it will result in an overspend for the council which Councillors must be aware of.

Cllr P McArdell proposed accepting the grant of £2,000 immediately with a further £2,000 to be issued next month with the caveat conditions that the Parish Council receives a copy of the constitution, evidence of 6k in the bank raised from the community (not including PC grant) and sight of the Community group bank accounts including confirmation one week prior to the next Council meeting when the second payment cheque would be issued. *As per grant rules if any money is not required for the purpose requested the money should not be issued or should be returned to the Parish Council.* Cllr M Heduan seconded this. (Cllr J O'Brien and Cllr D Brown supports only 2k in total as the council does not have the money for this). Councillors voted 6:2 for the approval of 4k (Cllr D Brown, Cllr J O'Brien were not in favour of the full amount due to overspend in the grant fund). It was **RESOLVED** to pay £2,000 now and £2,000 in September assuming the caveat conditions detailed are met.

To close the Covid 19 emergency grant fund. As a council we have received no monies from an outside authority, Councillors were asked to close the Covid 19 emergency grant fund. Cllr D Brown (proposed) and Cllr W Gould seconded this. Councillors **RESOLVED** to close the Covid 19 emergency grant fund, unanimously in favour of closing it.

269. AOB

Anti-Social Behaviour has been reported to the clerk. This has been passed to Neighborhood Policing and PC Webb. Residents are encouraged to report occurrences of this to the non-emergency police.

River Pollution the clerk received a report that some children in the village had become unwell after swimming in the river. This has been reported to the Environment Agency. Cllr Hudspeth will also follow this up. Cllr O'Brien indicated that people are having barbecues down by the river and waste from this may also be going into the river.

Flu Clinic – Woodstock Surgery have asked if they can run a flu clinic in the Village Hall. The Village Hall has confirmed that this is ok and the Parish Council has no concerns with this. The clerk has confirmed this to the surgery is waiting on the surgery to respond with further information.

School Travel Plan –Cllr M Heduan is finding out what can be done regarding safe travel options for children to school in Woodstock from the village. Cllr W Gould would like it known that the road (Woodstock Road) is a fast road and it is not safe to encourage children to cycle along that road. Cllr Heduan is talking with Roy Cox from Blenheim to ascertain how Blenheim can be used to facilitate a safer option. Cllr Ian Hudspeth noted that plans are being worked out, coaches are not being stopped. We await further updates.

Asset of Community Value – ACV for the White Horse Community Pub expires on 7 January 2021. The council will trigger ACV again during the moratorium.

White Horse Pub Change of Use – Cllr P McArdell asked Cllr R Bishop what the likelihood of change of use would be on the pub as the last pub in the village. Cllr Bishop will try and find out. Cllr O'Brien noted that the sports and social club is still in the village and Cllr D Brown added that we hoped there would not be unintended consequences affecting the social club if the pub reopens.

Burial Ground – Cllr D Baldwin requests that the burial ground is delegated to the Climate Emergency Group. The clerk and Cllr W Gould advised that there is a contract in place with a contractor. Cllr S Powell supports adjusting the management plan. Genny Early has some advice to give regarding the birds. The clerk will add it to next month's agenda for discussion but will also seek further guidance.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 9th September 2020 – 7pm – Zoom Virtual Meeting

Meeting ended at 21:10

Karen East, Clerk to the Parish Council

Email: clerk@stonesfieldpc.uk