

MINUTES OF YARDLEY GOBION PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD 7th June 2022

- Present** Cllrs L Llewellyn, N Wickens, J Thorne, A Curtis, Ward Councillor K Pritchard & residents Ms Robinson (later Councillor) & Ms Small.
- 4906** 1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllrs L Stephenson, J Hill, R Weston.
As Vice Chairman Cllr Wickens took the Chair for the meeting in the absence of the Chair.
- 4907** 2. **COUNCIL MATTERS**
- a) **Declaration of Interest:** Cllr Curtis declared an interest in Agenda items 7.1 f & j).
- b) **Co-Option of new Councillor:** Ms Trudy Robinson had indicated her willingness to be co-opted to the Council. Her co-option was proposed by Cllr Thorne and seconded by Cllr Curtis. All Cllrs voted in favour. Cllr Robinson signed her Acceptance of Office – witnessed by the Clerk. Cllr Wickens welcomed Cllr Robinson to the meeting and thanked her for her demonstration of community spirit.
- 4908** 3. **Previous Meeting:**
- 3.1** Agreement as a true record: The Minutes of Meeting held 3.5.22 were approved by all Cllrs, and agreed/signed as a correct record.
- 4909** 4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION:** Opened 7.22pm. Notes attached. Closed 7.27pm.
- 4910** 5. **Community Items:**
- a) Gigaclear – The Community Engagement Manager had advised she would be organising a walk round the village with members of the PC and the Project Delivery Lead. Cllr Wickens suggested the PC do their own walk round first prior to the walk round suggested by Gigaclear, but noted the Company had 6 months to rectify any problem identified.
- 4911** 6. **PLANNING MATTERS**
- 6.1** Applications received: None.
- 6.2** Applications approved: None.
- 6.3** **Other Planning:** Potterspurty Road Solar Farm – Cllr Wickens, Cllr Stephenson and the Clerk had attended a meeting between the PC’s involved and the developers. The main points noted were that different fields would form part of the project, and the cable from the solar farm could not link into the sub-station at Castlethorpe, but had to link with the one in CMK, which required additional approval from MK.
- 4912** 7. **Finance Matters**
- 7.1** **ACCOUNTS APPROVED FOR PAYMENT:**
- a) Clerk’s salary May 22= £412.80 (001500).
- b) PAYE Tax = £87.80 (paid by direct debit)
- c) BT Broadband = £35.18 (paid by direct debit)
- d) Mrs Schumacher – caretaking of play areas – May 22 = £50.00 (001501).
- e) DNH Contracts – dog bins May 22 - £64.56 + £12.91 VAT = £77.47 (001502)
- f) Yardley Gobion Village Hall – room hire 2022 - £30.00 (001503)
- g) LC Hedging & Grass Maintenance Ltd – mowing contract – £1,000.00 + £200.00 = £1,200.00 (001504)
- h) Connolly Accountants – payroll - £25.50 + £5.10 VAT = £30.60 (paid by direct debit)
Viking – stationery - £69.65 + £12.84 VAT = £82.49 (001505)
- i) Mr A Curtis – replacement valve for allotment water tank - £7.00 (001506)
Proposed by Cllr Thorne and seconded by Cllr Curtis.
- 7.2** **PAYMENTS RECEIVED:** WNC – 1st half of Precept = £12,750.00
- 7.3** **OTHER**
- a) Bank balances as at last statements – Lloyds - £44,593.48 (13.5.22) SW - £2,088.52 (1.4.22).
- b) Goat Field lease – The proposed tenant had approved the draft lease and Cllr Wickens had taken inventory pictures. Cllr Curtis had discussed plans for changes to the water supply with the tenant and advised that the maximum cost to the PC of work to meter water usage would be £100.00 for pipework. It was agreed that Cllr Curtis be delegated to deal with the matter.
- c) New website update – Data had been transferred to the new site, and the staging site was available at yardleygobionpc.teectest.co.uk. The domain name registration was progressing and Cllr Wickens & the Clerk had been given admin control of the site.
- d) **Internal Audit Report (read out to the meeting) –**
‘I met with Lesley Ratcliffe, Clerk and RFO on 26 May to conduct the 2021-22 internal audit. I would thank Lesley for his assistance and co-operation in carrying out the audit. Prior to our meeting I examined the publicly available information displayed on the council’s website including the council’s policies, procedures, agendas, minutes, financial and other records. Because the legal relaxations concerning meetings were largely removed in May 2021, I particularly reviewed the reversion from virtual to In-person meetings and noted that the council’s processes and procedures had been properly re-set. I sought evidence and was able to confirm that the previous year’s internal and external audit reports had been properly reported to and where necessary acted upon by the Council. I reviewed the council’s arrangements for the management and control of its business in the areas of bookkeeping, due process and governance (ie compliance with the ‘proper practices’ as set out in the Practitioners’ Guide), risk management, budget setting and monitoring, payroll, asset register, bank reconciliations, internal control and year-end procedures and compliance with the display of information including the exercise of public rights to enable me to reach a conclusion regarding the enquiries I am required to make as set out in the Annual Internal Audit Report (AIAR) that forms part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

I noted two issues, as follows; the notice of public rights and publication of the unaudited AGAR, that includes the dates for the period of inspection was not displayed on the website. Instead, the official document summarising the rights was published alongside all sections of the AGAR and the required notice (that I have seen) was prominently displayed on the parish council public notice board. I am satisfied this was due to momentary confusion at a time when the council was actively considering improvements to its website including transferring to a new provider, in response to comments made by me in my 2020/21 NCALC narrative internal audit report) and because the requirements for display were met, in spirit rather than to the letter I have answered 'yes' rather than 'no' to question M in the Annual Internal Audit Report (AIAR). To prevent a recurrence, I have suggested to Lesley that it would be prudent to adopt a 'belt and braces' approach by additionally minuting the confirmed dates for the exercise of public rights. The balance brought forward was £38,300, the precept for the year was £25,500 and the council's year-end carry forward stands at £39,367. In discussion with Lesley, it transpired that while some of this money is intended for specific purposes (that would, in my opinion meet the criteria for earmarked reserves set out in the current (2022) version of the Practitioners' Guide) the earmarks are informal and notional. Even allowing for these sums, the upshot is that the council is carrying forward more than 12 months of net revenue expenditure, the generally accepted recommended maximum set out in para 5.33 of the current (2022) version of the Practitioners' Guide. Furthermore, whilst I understand that the level of reserves is routinely taken into consideration as part of the budget and precept setting process, the carry forward grew by £1,067 during the course of the year. Smaller authorities have no specific rights to accumulate funds via the precept and I have therefore answered 'no' to question D in the AIAR. The council should now review its reserves to identify the sums that can legitimately be classed as 'earmarks' and then formulate and publish a reserves policy to manage the issue going forward, drawing on the guidance set out in the Practitioners' Guide paras 5.30 – 5.38 to which I have drawn Lesley's attention. Notwithstanding the above, based on the information made available to me I am satisfied that in all significant respects, the internal control objectives are being delivered and achieved to a standard adequate to meet the council's needs. Accordingly, I have completed and signed the Annual Internal Audit Report as required.' Cllr Llewellyn proposed that the report be noted and accepted. Seconded by Cllr Thorne. All in favour.

- e) Councillors then discussed suggestions for the earmarking of reserves as mentioned in the Internal Audit report, such as providing a mobile defibrillator for the First Responder based in the village (approx. cost £2,000), replacing the trees at the entrance to the village as discussed previously (again approx. cost £2,000), providing fitness equipment and/or play area equipment in School Lane playing field, creating a wild meadow at the land off Woodville Crescent, constructing a layby outside 50-54 Moorend Road to alleviate the parking problem at the narrowest part of the road, and the planting of a permanent Christmas tree on Elm Green. The Clerk would obtain quotations in order that the ideas could be further discussed and voted upon. Ward Cllr Pritchard agreed to speak with Highways about the layby.
- f) Annual Return 31st March 2022: All Cllrs had received a copy of the Annual Return and all supporting paperwork. Cllr Weston had carried out an independent audit previously.
- i) Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement was read out to the meeting. Cllr Llewellyn then proposed that Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement - be received, noted and approved. Seconded by Cllr Thorne. Approved by all Cllrs. Cllr Wickens as Chairman and the Clerk then signed the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the PC.
- ii) The Clerk as RFO had previously signed & dated the Accounting Statements prior to presenting them to the PC. Cllr Llewellyn proposed that Section 2 – Accounting Statements - be received, noted and formally approved. Seconded by Cllr Thorne. Approved by all Cllrs. Cllr Wickens as Chairman then signed the Statement of Accounts on behalf of the PC.
- iii) The dates for the display of the Notice of Public Rights & associated documents were noted as being from 13th June to 22nd July 2022.
- iv) Cllr Wickens expressed the Council's appreciation of the diligence shown by the Clerk in dealing with the Council's financial affairs. Ward Cllr Pritchard leaves 8.30pm.

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8. Councillor Reports:

- a) Street Lighting – E.on had quoted £105.00 + VAT to remove existing bracket and lantern, provide & fit replacement short bracket, refit existing lantern to replacement bracket and re-connect at 6 Moorend Road. Cllr Curtis proposed this quotation be accepted. Seconded by Cllr Llewellyn. All in favour. A query had been raised concerning replacement lamps for the lighting columns in Eastfield Crescent & Marlborough Way. The Clerk had been advised in 2021 that the lamps had been ordered, and she would try to find out why they had not been fitted.
- b) Village Trees – Reserves would be earmarked to replace trees at the entrance to the village (see above). An email had been received from the village Cub Scout leader advising that the Cub Scouts were taking part in the tree planting initiative from the Woodland Trust and asking if some trees could be planted on the Coffee Pot field. The Clerk had requested further information but had heard nothing. Cllrs noted that the PC does not have much land that would accommodate more trees, although School Lane field could be a possibility depending on the types of tree. The Clerk was asked to advise the Cub Scout leader accordingly.
- c) Allotments – Cllr Curtis had inspected the allotment plots and asked the Clerk to write to various ploholders whose plots were causing concern. He had received a request that the side paths be

cut by the mowing contractor when the main track was cut. Cllr Thorne would obtain a quotation for this.

- d) Village Hall – The AGM was held in May and was poorly attended. The Committee was looking for more officers, and a new Chair. Possible damage to the structure had been noted and this required urgent attention. Cllr Curtis had checked with the VH’s insurers and they would not deal with this issue. Therefore the VH would be taking up the kind offer of £600.00 towards the cost of a structural survey from the PC, which was much appreciated. The VH secretary had emailed thanks from the Committee to the Clerk.
- e) Recreation Centre – No report.
- f) Playing fields – Cllr Hill had oiled the swings in School Lane play area. Mrs Schumacher’s report noted a great deal of rubbish in that area and Cllr Wickens asked that Cllrs consider either more or bigger bins, or asking that they be emptied more often. Yogi Bear was unstable and Cllr Weston planned to deal with this on his return from holiday. Cllr Wickens also noted that the gates of the play area opened outwards, meaning children could leave the area quite easily, and wondered whether they could be changed to open inwards. Advice would be taken on this point.
- g) Highways – No issues reported.
- h) Mowing – Cllr Thorne had asked for the contractor to carry out work on the urban footpaths in the village, which were due to be dealt with 4 times a year, and had not been done yet. Cllr Curtis noted that the VH grass cutting had been very poor, and the contractor was aware. Additionally the exit from the allotment site was very overgrown, making it dangerous, but it was thought that this was dealt with by WNC as part of their contract and would only be cut 4 times a year.

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- 9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
- a) **5th July 2022 7.15pm in the Village Hall**

Meeting closed 9.00pm.

PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

As Ward Councillor, Cllr Pritchard advised that WNC was recruiting 14 more Planning Officers to clear the backlog of applications that had not been determined. He had been appointed to the Strategic Planning Committee and noted that proposed industrial sites in Towcester were now subject to a judicial review and he had asked that the proposal for the industrial site at Furtho Pit be included within this review. There had been a large number of responses to the Spatial Strategy consultation and it was expected that more details would be available towards the end of the year. He reminded Councillors that the Appeal for the Traveller’s Site off the Northampton Road was due to be heard on 27th July.

