

**COLESHILL PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING MONDAY 22 JULY 2013**

Present: Councillors Prideaux (Chairman) (TPx), Ware (DW), Hallchurch (CH), McGhee (DM) & Woodgate (LW). Elaine West (EW) for item 3 *et seq*

Apology: Cllr Parker

In attendance: Charlotte Gordon of CDC as locum clerk

9 members of the public

- 1. Minutes of previous ordinary meeting (20 May) and three extraordinary meetings (21 June, 1 July & 11 July) were approved**
Rather than delay proceedings the chairman postponed signing them until after the meeting.
- 2. Casual vacancy**
The obligatory wait for responses to the advertised position being over it was agreed to co-opt Elaine West. TPx welcomed her to the Council
- 3. Resignation of councillor.**
TPx read out a letter of resignation from Cllr Sarah Parker. Because of increased filial responsibilities and the demands of her academic work she felt unable to commit to Council work. She hoped to play a part in any steering group to take forward ideas from the village questionnaire.
- 4. County Councillor**
TPx reminded the meeting that County Cllr Butcher had indicated at the previous meeting that he intends to attend meetings quarterly.
- 5. District Councillor**
Neither present
- 6. Chairman's remarks**
 - Penny Harris, the clerk, suffered a stroke on 19th May. Since then communication has been intermittent. Councillors have been loth to pursue her for work and PC property as they have been unsure of her health and mental state. As employers they have a duty of care to their employees even if contact is difficult. Mrs. Harris tendered her resignation on 19th July.
 - While a number of financial and administrative items had not been actioned by the clerk, the chairman assured attendees that the PC's bank accounts were in order
 - The PC had received a gracious thank you note from Mayank Patel of Grove Mill. This was in response to the chairman having written to him thanking him for the restoration work on the windmill

- Special mention was made of the efforts of Susan Smith and Heather Auton towards the success of the inaugural Village Day
- The chairman advised the meeting that after the democratic period he would invoke clause 1c of the Standing orders to allow councilors to discuss in private personnel matters.

District Councillor Alan Hardie joined the meeting

7. Planning

- There have been no new applications since the last ordinary meeting.
- Waller's Oak has lost its appeal against the refusal to grant retrospective permission for its carport. CDC has told us that they are likely to take enforcement action shortly.
- Various messages have been exchanged about the construction of a basement at Oak Tree Cottage. CDC currently appear to accept the assurances from the applicants' agent that no basement is being built but that, even if it were, their current view is that it would be unlikely to cause sufficient harm to make it "expedient" for them to take enforcement action. Since it is quite apparent to us that a basement is indeed under construction and that this never appeared in the approved application, we shall be submitting our further observations before they make their final determination [subsequently done].

8. Village Questionnaire

CH thought there were now some 23 replies – a response rate of some 10%. Results, opinions and ideas will be posted on the village website

9. Finance

- In the unavoidable absence of the RFO, no finance report was given.
- A new Internal Auditor had been appointed on 12th July: Phil Hood of Arrow Accounting in Oxfordshire had been recommended by BALC
- The question of Use of Reserves had arisen in the context of a suggestion that they be used to improve the facilities of the cricket club's pavilion as an additional venue for village events. TPx read out a letter from Mr. and Mrs. David Smith in which they questioned:-
 - the possible use of larger than usual reserves in this manner but also why, if the reserves are large, the Precept was increased this year;
 - the viability of two venues
 - the precedent set for other organizations to approach the PC for funding
 - whether what appears to be a personal proposal by a councilor is allowed by the Code of Conduct

10. Penn Festival

DM confirmed that the festival was held on the advertised dates - 19-21 July - and no complaints of noise have been received. CDC environmental

officers confirmed that the organisers had correctly implemented all noise abatement measures. DM remarked that the event' minimal impact on the village was probably because the stage had been turned through 180 degrees

DM suggested that the measures applied at this event should be used as a template for future music events which may be held at that site.

It was agreed that this item will be removed from the agenda until next year.

TPx thanked DM for his considerable work with the organizers and the licensing and safety authorities to safeguard the village from noise.

11. Traffic triangle

This was another item which had not been attended to by the clerk TPx to remind our County Councillor of concerns.

It was agreed that the clerk should raise this problem again with BCC.

Their present stance that budget money does not exist for this work does not answer the area of road safety. The present condition of the triangle on a blind bend is a safety hazard.

12. Pond Management Plan

It was decided that it was premature to bring this item forward as the Commons Management Committee still had work to do on prospects for the Common

13. Meetings – none to report

14. Councillors' Reports

- **Open Spaces.**

- Three new dog waste bins had been erected; two on the Common and one at the cricket club gate
- The drainage problem by the War Memorial was noted
- The grazing cows for the common are now expected to arrive sometime in September.

- **Website.**

- The clerk's email password had been reset.
- A procedure to ensure the effectiveness of both the village email list and the council web page was needed.
- A deputy web master is needed.

- **Cricket Club.** TPx reminded the meeting of the first XI's playing successes in the higher league to which it had been promoted

- **Tennis Club.** Nothing to report.

- **Village Hall.** TPx mentioned that a new Computer Club had been started by Penny Ware. Two meetings had been held on Monday mornings with encouraging attendance. The Club is open to all.

- **School.** School continues to do well. The end of term proved difficult as Mrs Earp was absent due to illness and Paul Robertson a former governor and husband of teacher Sue Robertson died suddenly. Our year two children move on in September but we welcome 20 new children and their families into Reception
- **Play Area.** The annual inspection had been delayed because of events described in 6 above. The inspection will take place on August 5th. [Subsequent to the meeting it was decided to close the Play Area until the inspection had taken place as there was an ambiguity in the wording of the requirements of the insurance policy].
- **Newsletter.** Copy deadline August 24th and circulation two weeks thereafter.

15. Date of Next Meeting

- Monday 16 September

16. DEMOCRATIC PERIOD

- Peter Lawrence made a number of points including the appropriateness of the 21% increase in the precept. TPx did note that any meaningful increase on a small starting number was bound to be large but did note the context of Mr. Lawrence's in the straitened fiscal environment.
- Mr. Lawrence expressed regret at Sarah Parker's resignation.
- Mr. Lawrence endorsed the Village Plan project and urged that if it advances that an Environmental Plan be incorporated and that the budget should have a line for this work.
- He also reminded the meeting that, as a taxing authority, the Parish Council had responsibilities to its taxpayers and that "nice to have" projects should be viewed against that background. There are other ways of raising money for desirable village schemes apart from the precept.
- Jan Atkinson asked for the current size of the bank balance and also about the role of internal and external auditors [the Chairman provided answers]. She also queried the safety of users of the Play Area – see 14 *supra*
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- Tony Barber made a number of points. He felt it particularly important that keeping the village tidy be established as a priority and that we should try to ensure that hedges for which no one else took responsibility should be checked and cut where necessary.

The meeting was closed at 10:12