

FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL, HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM DUE TO THE ONGOING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ON THE 18TH JANUARY 2021, IN THE COUNTY OF OXFORDSHIRE AT 7.30PM.

PRESENT:	Chairman:	Peter Newell
	Vice-Chairman:	Robert Crocker
	Councillors:	Mary Ann Canning, Peter Foster, Matthew Ruddle, Véro McCoy, Tim Webster, Bill Phillips (from 7.45pm).
	District Councillors:	Alaa al Yousuf (till 9.25pm)
	County Councillor:	Liam Walker (from 8.25pm-9.00pm)
	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 speak about a proposal for a new Cricket Scoreboard.

A report had been circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting regarding the proposed cricket scoreboard and Simon briefly talked through the Club's request.

The Cricket Club had secured a great deal of new sponsorship, and they wanted to create a scoreboard with advertising around it.

The idea was to create a swing out style scoreboard, attached to the wooden fence next to the Newell Room. It would be wooden, hinged at the end furthest from the Newell Room and have a wheel to enable it to be easily opened.

The Club would pay for it, build it, and maintain it, and if the worst-case scenario was to happen, make good any damage to the existing fence. They would like to add the logos of the companies on the board.

They estimate the scoreboard would be 2 metres wide and a metre high. When there are no matches the scoreboard will be closed and secured so it cannot open, and it could be removed at the end of each season if required.

Councillors were positive about these ideas and noted this item would be discussed later in the meeting. Simon thanked the Parish Council for their time and left the meeting at 7.40pm.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Marilyn Davies.

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 December 2020

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 21st December 2020 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

It was reported that the radio planners were considering a site at the BT Exchange on the corner of Wroslyn Road and the A4095. Peter F would keep the Council updated on any further developments.

6.2 PC Noticeboard – to update on progress to remove PC notice board on the corner of Parklands

The board had not yet been removed but would be done shortly.

6.3 Annual Parish Meeting 2021/ Big Lunch 2021 – to discuss whether to start planning for these events to take place

With the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, and with infection and death rates still very high, it was felt unlikely that the country would be in a position by April to allow over 100+ people to sit indoors in a Village Hall. It was therefore agreed not to hold the Annual Parish Meeting or the Big Lunch this year. If the situation changed then thought would be given to holding these events later in the year. The Clerk would place a note in the Grapevine to advise residents.

Action: Clerk to place note in Grapevine as above.

7. PLANNING - Applications received & WODC Decisions plus:

7.1 Applications Received: None.

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 EYNHAM ROUNDABOUT, EYNHAM (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.

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.

7.6 Inspired Villages proposal – Inspired Villages proposal – to note any update following the pre-application meeting on 6th Jan

The pre-application meeting had been held with the WODC Planning Officer on 6th January and their full report was awaited. It was felt likely that as this proposal was not included in the Local Plan, and that not much had changed since the last application for this particular site had been rejected back in 2018, then the likely outcome would be negative. However, Inspired Villages were keen to find out what residents would like to see, and they were in talks with the veterinary practice. An exhibition was due to be arranged in March and Inspired Villages would provide further details in due course. It was noted that the initial plans were rather vague and provided illustrative rather than definitive plans - the next set of plans should provide more detail and clarity. The final report from the WODC Planning Officer was likely to be released in the next few weeks after legal and technical advice had been sought.

8. REPORT OF COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL BUSINESS

In Alaa's update he provided some information about the tax base calculation that had now been received. The big deficit in the WODC budget that had been reported back in October had now been rectified due to some important financial changes, (namely the business rates calculation and the new homes bonus threshold), that the Government had postponed. This meant that WODC had an unchanged programme of spending and support as it now had a balanced budget, and this would be reviewed again at the full Council meeting in February with a view to formally approving the budget. Alaa also provided an update about a conversation held with the CEO of Blenheim about the possibility of support with land for some allotments, or community woodland/orchard in the village. The outcome of a meeting last week was that Blenheim were prepared to provide 1.4 acres of land in the field opposite the school. It was noted this field was prone to flooding so there were some discussions around groundworks and possible hardcore to be provided by the entrance gate. No agreement had been signed as yet, but this would be a tenancy agreement with usual terms and conditions attached. The Allotment Association would liaise with Blenheim to finalise the arrangements.

In Liam's update he advised that a Covid-19 mass vaccination centre was being set up at the Kassam Stadium in Oxford which was due to go live in February. Nearly all of the over 80's age group had now been vaccinated, and it had now been opened up to the 70+ age group. He also explained that the 20mph motion was more of an objective than a legal position, and that if there was a 20mph zone (of limited extent) then traffic calming would be required, whereas if it was a complete 20mph street, then traffic calming would not be required.

Alaa and Liam were both thanked for their updates and, Liam left the meeting at 9.00pm and Alaa left the meeting at 9.25pm.

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 31st December 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.

9.2 Review of Budget and Precept Requirement for 2021/22 and to discuss whether to increase the overall total following confirmation of tax base

WODC had confirmed that the estimated tax base for Freeland for the 2021/22 financial year would be 693.37, and the Clerk had had it confirmed that it was very unlikely to change. Based on the figures agreed at the November meeting, the current calculation showed a negative increase in the tax rise of -1.40%, with a precept figure of **£64,005**. In view of this it was suggested adding some additional funds to the General Reserves to bring the negative figure to a positive one. After some discussions, Council **resolved** to increase the reserves by £2,000 to give a total precept figure of **£66,005**, which would bring the tax rise to 1.67%. The Clerk would notify WODC that evening of the change in figures.

Action: Clerk to notify WODC re change in precept request.

9.3 Approval of invoices for payment

The Council approved invoices for payment as listed on the invoices for payment sheet distributed with the meeting. These invoices would all be paid by BACS online via the new bank account with Unity Trust. Council therefore **resolved** to approve all of the following invoices for payment:

The following invoices are requested to be approved for payment:			
BACS Ref Number	To whom paid	Details	Amount (£)
BACS 012	The Play Inspection Company Ltd*	Annual play area inspection	180.00
BACS 013	Lisa Smith	Clerk's salary - January	949.82
BACS 014	R A Crocker Ltd	Materials for new shed	474.97
BACS 015	Bill Phillips	Litter collection Oct/Nov/Dec 2020	250.00
BACS 016	Lisa Smith	refund expenses	192.65
BACS 017	Thames Water Utilities Ltd	Water connection to playing field	4,008.00
BACS 018	HMRC	NI Contributions for Clerk Dec 2020	60.09
		Total:	6,115.53
Plus:			
	New NEST pension payment of £33.09 (employee & employer contributions). The new amount of £18.91 has been deducted from Clerk's salary for January salary payment.		
	* cheque 102688 issued in Nov has got lost in banking system so has been cancelled and a new payment has been made to company.		

9.4 To update on the review of the effectiveness of internal audit process (to include review of financial system)

The review was carried out on 12th January by the Chairman and Robert in consultation with the Clerk and a report of their findings had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. The report found the system of control of the Parish Council finances to be appropriate and being carried out in a proper, transparent and rigorous manner and no recommendations for any changes were made. Council noted and accepted the findings of the report.

9.5 Any other financial business

A payment of £40.00 was due to be paid to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) which was the annual data protection fee under the GDPR regulations. If this fee was paid via Direct Debit, a £5 reduction would be applied. After a brief discussion, Council **resolved** to approve paying this annual fee by Direct Debit going forward. The Clerk would arrange this.

The Clerk also asked that Tim and Robert verified their email addresses with the new bank so that they could authorise payments if required.

Action: Clerk to set up direct debit as above, Tim and Robert to verify email address with bank.

10. PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ITEMS

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

10.1.1 Play area reports – to update on trampoline tile gluing

Vero had the pink book and would pass it to Bill. There were no problems to report.

The trampoline tile had not been glued due to the damp weather conditions. It was agreed to leave this until the Spring when the weather would be much drier, and the tile could then be glued successfully.

10.1.2 New storage building on field – to update on progress of new shed, and to note concerns from resident re drainage on field by shed, and to discuss when path will be reinstated.

Robert gave an update. The doors were due to be fitted on 26th January, after which he would install the internal cladding. An additional load of hardcore was required to relocate the gateway and sort out the pathway by the shed. This was agreed.

A resident had raised concerns that surface drainage from the playing field remained an issue that could affect their property, especially if the drain nearest their property became blocked. Robert had spoken with the resident and explained that the soakaway that was planned to help with capturing this surface water would not be possible now as the water table was too high on the field. Robert felt relatively confident that the smaller soak-away for the shed roof will provide somewhere for the water to go, but if the water table was very high after heavy rainfall then the water would still drain off from the field. It was noted that this was not a problem easily solved as from the very nature and level of the area, the water naturally always drained to that corner of the field. It was also noted that the intention to build a raised level bund to act as a barrier and to prevent the surface water pouring rapidly out from the field down onto Blenheim Lane should also help, and this work would be carried out in the next month or two.

Action: Robert to install cladding and to arrange work on path, gateway and soakaway/landscaping.

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 had now been planted on the field. Councillors passed on their thanks to Robert for carrying out this work.

10.1.4 Water for cricket square – to update on progress with adding a water supply to the new storage shed.

The quote from Thames Water had to be paid before any work could commence, this had been included on the list of invoices to pay this month which had now been authorised. The Clerk would get the bill paid and liaise with Thames Water about next steps.

Action: Clerk to arrange work with Thames Water.

10.1.5 Play equipment replacement for wooden climber – to receive an update from working group.

It was suggested last month setting up a working group to look at this in more detail and to include a maximum of 6 parents to be involved. Mary Ann agreed to set up a working group.

Action: Mary Ann to set up working group and to write to max. 6 parents to get involved.

10.1.6 Oak tree on Eastern side of field – to note request to have a more detailed review of tree carried out.

The Vice-Chair took over the Chairmanship of the meeting for this item as the resident was the Chairman's brother-in-law. The Chairman did not take part in any discussion of this item.

Last month a resident raised concerns about the oak tree on the Eastern side of the playing field. At the December meeting it was agreed to advise the resident that the tree was pretty healthy and that if they wished to have the crown lifted, they could do so at their own expense.

The resident has since requested to have a more detailed review of the tree carried out. Whilst asking a local contractor to quote for clearing the amenity area, Robert had also arranged to have a review of the oak tree carried out and also the horse chestnut tree adjacent to it on the field. Some of the lower and mid branches within the oak tree had severed and so it was agreed to approve the quote of £420 to have the oak tree trimmed and the horse chestnut tree, plus the tree work in the amenity area. The Clerk would contact the contractor to arrange this work.

The Chairmanship was then passed back to the Chairman.

Action: Clerk to write to resident with decision about oak tree and to arrange work with contractor.

10.1.7 Northern boundary of playing field (including area behind zip wire) – to receive an update on tidying work due to be carried out and to discuss how to develop this area going forward.

Robert was due to speak with the local contractor to arrange for the work to be carried out when the ground conditions allowed.

Action: Robert to liaise with Steve Sparrowhawk re above work.

10.1.8 Cricket Scoreboard – to discuss and approve a proposal to build a wooden swing out style scoreboard to attach to the wooden fence by Newell Room.

Following on from the presentation and report circulated by Simon Brown, Councillors were very supportive of the cricket scoreboard proposal. A query was raised about the condition of the wooden posts and Robert agreed to check that they weren't rotten or needed replacing. Subject to Robert's assessment of the condition of the posts, Council were happy to approve the proposal for the cricket scoreboard. The Clerk would advise Simon.

Action: Robert to check posts on fence, Clerk to advise Simon Brown.

10.2 Village Highway Matters – to receive any reports: None.

10.2.1 Traffic calming measures – to receive any update from Traffic Calming Working Group to include 20mph zones and deterring HGVs using Pigeon House Lane.

The Traffic Calming Group were due to meet this month and would invite some of the residents who had shown an interest in this, as well as the Speedwatch team to the meeting. Mary Ann would prepare a large-scale plan of the village to look at possible 20mph zones.

In the meantime, Hanborough Parish Council had been in touch to request the local Parish Councils work together to introduce 20mph zones in their villages to enable the costs to be spread out across the villages. The following proposal was read out and approved at the meeting:

'Bladon, Combe, Freeland and Hanborough Parish Councils are all investigating the introduction of 20mph speed limits in their Parishes, as being included as built-up areas, and separately and jointly, would like to support fully the Motion being presented to the Meeting of West Oxfordshire District Council on 20 January at 12pm:

Item 13: Notice of Motion – 20 mph Speed Limits The following Motion has been received in the names of Councillors Ted Fenton and Jane Doughty, namely:- "In December 2020 Oxfordshire County Council unanimously resolved to support the premise that 20mph is the optimum speed limit in built-up areas. This Council supports that decision and whilst it is not the highways authority decisions are made which can affect road safety. Layout of new roads, traffic calming in existing roads and the provision of safe space for active travel are all matters on which this Council has an influence. West Oxfordshire District Council therefore resolves to include consideration of appropriate measures to improve road safety in all relevant decisions, especially planning, to ensure that its roads are as safe as possible for all users".'

Action: Mary Ann to prepare large scale plan of village and to arrange meeting of group, Clerk to advise Hanborough PC of approval of motion detailed above.

10.2.2 Overgrown hedge in Broadmarsh Lane – to note any update from Highways re overgrown laurel hedge on unregistered land in Broadmarsh Lane.

This was proving to be a bit of stalemate situation as no-one wished to take ownership of this hedge. After some discussions, it was agreed to ask a local contractor to take a look at the hedge and provide a few options to include either removing the hedge, or perhaps cutting it down to ground level. Robert was happy to liaise with the contractor.

Action: Clerk to ask contractor to liaise with Robert about hedge.

10.3 Footpath & Bridleway matters/Footpath Book – to receive any reports: None.

Robert had the book and although the rota was complete for this year, he would dig out the book and return to the Clerk.

Action: Robert to return footpath book to Clerk.

10.4 Garden of Remembrance – to receive any reports:

No reports had been received.

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

Basic maintenance had been carried out and Tim was going to review it again shortly. As reported last month the GOR gates needed some attention, mainly painting and the top bar was rotten although still felt to be ok. It was agreed that replacing the gates was not a priority at the moment and Tim was happy to carry out some repair work to the current gate with wood filler and paint.

Action: Tim to continue with various jobs at GOR, and carry out repair work to gates

10.5 Freeland Hall Management Committee – to receive any reports

There was nothing much to report as the Hall was currently closed due to the second Covid-19 lockdown regulations. It was reported that a recent High Court ruling made regarding insurance claims for loss of income may be applicable to village halls and so it would be worth investigating. Robert would pass this information to the Village Hall Treasurer.

10.6 Amenity Area – to review reinstatement of ground works and to discuss hedge planting and to approve quote for other development work.

The quote from the local contractor to remove three old cherry trees, a hawthorn tree and to prune back some of the branches on the oak tree was approved. Plants needed to be priced up and approved so Robert and Mary Ann would write a report with some proposals of plants and costings for next month.

Action: Clerk to arrange work with contractor and Mary Ann and Robert to do report with costings for plants.

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

(a) OALC December update & new lockdown guidance – details had been emailed around.

(b) Community Led Plan – to discuss a request to review and update the plan. A resident had contacted the Council to ask if the Community Led Plan could be reviewed and updated. They are particularly interested in the community woodland, but as yet no land had been identified to pursue this further. They suggest that perhaps the plan could be reviewed and updated with a target of actions for 5 years at a time, which could make it more achievable. Councillors noted that the CLP was a project carried out separately from the Parish Council by a group of residents who then reported back to the Parish Council, and maybe this was something that the new Parish Council could look at after the elections.

It was then suggested asking the resident if they would be willing to take on the updating of the Plan with a group of interested residents and then reporting back to the Parish Council with their findings. This was agreed.

Action: Clerk to contact resident to ask if they would be willing to set up a group to review the CLP.

Plus additional items received since meeting papers were sent out:

(c) Eynsham Roadrunners banner – to note request to put up a banner somewhere in the village – banner is 8'x3', v shaped with 3 stakes – After a brief discussion, Council agreed that the banner could be placed on the grass verge on the corner of Parklands as this was understood not to be owned by Highways.

(d) Crime and anti-social behaviour in Freeland – to note a query from resident about the responsibilities of the Parish Council in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour. The Clerk had received some communication from a resident enquiring about what responsibilities the Parish Council had in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour. The Clerk had sought advice and responded to the resident that this was really down to local law enforcement to deal with rather than the Parish Council. However, it was agreed to place a note in the Grapevine encouraging residents to report any such crimes or behaviour to the Police as the Parish Council were not able to take any action.

Action: Clerk to place note in Grapevine as above.

12. CIRCULATION

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

13. PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS – TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON WHETHER THE PC ELECTIONS WILL GO AHEAD THIS YEAR AND TO DISCUSS ANY ACTION REQUIRED

Current advice from WODC was that the government's position was that the elections would still go ahead on 6th May. However, it was felt highly likely that these would be postponed, but Councillors would await further advice from WODC.

14. TO RECEIVE A MONTHLY UPDATE REGARDING FREELAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

The school were providing online learning for the children, and the year 2 class teacher, Mrs Bailey, had left.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – FOR PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ONLY

None.

16. 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 15th February 2021 at 7.30pm.**

There being no other business the meeting closed at 10.21pm.