

FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL, HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM DUE TO THE ONGOING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ON THE 16TH NOVEMBER 2020, 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, Bill Phillips, Tim Webster.
	District Councillors:	Merilyn Davies (till 8.10pm) Alaa al Yousuf (till 9.15pm)
	County Councillor:	Liam Walker (from 8.40pm till 9.25pm)
	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

One member of the public was present for this session – Kenny Wylie, who wished to listen to the meeting.

2. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – None.

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.

Bill Phillips (personal) as having an interest in item 9.5 Precept – Litter Collection.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 To approve and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 19th October 2020

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 19th October 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

There was nothing further to report. Peter F would keep the Council updated on any further developments.

6.2 Freeland Methodist Church: To receive an update on future of Methodist Church

There was nothing further to report.

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

The Clerk had asked a local contractor to remove the noticeboard and dispose of it, which they had agreed to do. There would be an approximate charge of £65 to carry out this work which was approved by the Council. The contractor advised that the board was possibly attached to the neighbouring property's fence so they would speak to the resident prior to removal.

6.4 Fibre to the Premises Broadband – to discuss further an approach from Gigaclear re broadband rollout in Freeland and to note where they will be digging up the roads – details emailed around

The Clerk had received a few concerns from residents re letters they had received from Gigaclear. The Chairman provided a brief update.

Essentially Gigaclear would be installing fibre to properties in narrow trenches dug in the verges or roads. This would give ultra-fast broadband and allow much greater downloads and uploads than was currently possible.

Outside of properties they would be installing POTs (Points of Termination) in the ground. Then, if residents joined the system, they would link the POTs to CDCs (Customer Drop Cabinets) next to their homes. If residents wished to link to the fibre network, they would need to register for Government paid vouchers (£1,500 for residential properties) which Gigaclear claimed and then they would fit the system for free to the POTs. The link from the POTs to individual home CDCs was also free - provided certain standard criteria were met such as having less than 10 metres of tarmac or concrete to dig up. If they needed to dig up longer stretches of driveways than the standard amount allowed, there was a charge for the extra work involved.

They hoped to start digging by the end of November/beginning of December this year (weather permitting) with completion of the work by the end of 2021.

Gigaclear were also able to be a broadband service provider in place of current service providers but this was an option and residents could continue with their current service provider using the new fibre connection provided that their current service provider was willing to use the Gigaclear network (which currently not all were). Most of the providers listed on the website were small providers and not the usual household names.

It was noted that the digging phase of this operation would cause considerable disruption in the Village, but the future benefits would be considerable for many residents. It was noted that Gigaclear had confirmed that they would be digging up around The Green area and not across it, and Council approved them making trenches around the Green should this approval be required.

Merilyn reported that she had met with the Project Management team at Gigaclear and discussed the roll out of their work. It was likely that larger companies such as BT and Sky would want to install their own networks rather than use the Gigaclear one which would mean digging up the village again. She was hoping to get Robert Courts and the Government on board to ensure the larger companies had to use the Gigaclear network rather than have numerous installations and disruption.

It was also mentioned that residents in Nash Lane had raised concerns about a very old and fragile water main that ran down the length of Nash Lane that could be damaged if Gigaclear dug up this road. Alaa had raised this with Gigaclear but had not received a response, and Merilyn advised that she would raise this at the next meeting she was due to attend with Gigaclear.

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 EYNSHAM ROUNDABOUT, EYNSHAM (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.

20/02423/HHD

89 BROADMARSH LANE, FREELAND.

Erection of single storey rear extension for Ms M Birch.

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 Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document Consultation – to discuss whether the PC wish to make a response to this consultation

Details of this consultation had been emailed round to the Councillors prior to the meeting. After a brief discussion, Council agreed not to make any response.

7.7 Salt Cross Garden Village Outline Planning Application response – to discuss and agree the Parish Council's response to the Salt Cross Garden Village consultation

Details of a proposed response to the Outline Planning Application for the Salt Cross Garden Village had been circulated to Councillors for comment prior to the meeting. No amendments were to be made to the document, that had been prepared by Russ Canning. Council **resolved** to approve the document in its entirety and to submit it to WODC as the Parish Council's response. Council wished to pass on their sincere thanks to Russ for preparing such a detailed, thorough and well thought through response which was much appreciated.

Action: Clerk to submit response as above.

7.8 WODC Licensing Application - for AJ Catering, Unit 3 Wroslyn Road Industrial Estate – details emailed around

Details of a licensing application had been emailed around prior to the meeting and no objections or comments were made.

8. REPORT OF COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL BUSINESS

Merilyn provided a brief update to advise that she was now a Cabinet Member for Housing and Safe-Guarding so if anyone had any planning or safe-guarding related issue they were encouraged to contact her.

She also advised that she was being contacted by the team at Inspired Villages regarding their development plans for the area by the Freeland Garden Centre, but she would not be commenting due to her new role on the Planning Committee.

In Alaa's update he provided some information about some Electric Vehicle Charging Points that were being installed throughout the District in the Spring next year. This was being done in 2 phases. Phase 1 would have 6 charging points installed in car parks at Witney (x2), Carterton, Chipping Norton, Eynsham and Woodstock, with each charging point having 2 parking bays to charge 2 cars. Work was due to start in the Spring next year and it was hoped to be completed by the Summer. Phase 2 would follow but the number of car parks and locations was still being decided.

Liam's update provided a report about the OCC winter operations that were due to commence shortly, including the gritter lorries being deployed across the county. He also advised that the roadworks on the A4095 junction with the Mears site were due to be completed by 7th December.

Liam also provided some information about a new speeding taskforce that had been set up to tackle speeding in the county. The fatality rate in Oxfordshire had exceeded last year's figures and the number of serious road collisions seemed to be on the increase. The taskforce was a joint partnership between OCC, Thames Valley Police, the County and District Crime Commissioner and the County Fire and Rescue teams. It was hoped to give the same publicity about speeding as there was about drinking and driving and he hoped to provide more support to the Speedwatch teams.

The District and County Councillors were thanked for their updates and Marilyn then left the meeting at 8.10pm, Alaa left the meeting at 9.15pm and Liam left at 9.30pm.

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 30th October 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 Annual audit – To receive an update on progress

The Clerk gave a brief update on the audit. All information had been submitted to the external audit provider and the outcome was still awaited.

9.3 Online banking – to receive an update on changing bank account from Barclays to Unity Trust Bank

The Clerk had started the process of transferring the PC bank account to the Unity Trust bank. The new account had now been opened and the bank mandate forms had been signed to officially close the account and switch everything to Unity. The representative from Unity explained that there would be a redirection order in place for a year after the account was opened to ensure any cheques that had been issued would be honoured and any payments or receipts could be redirected to the new account. With this in mind, a bank transfer date of 1st December 2020 was agreed (rather than wait till January).

9.4 Volunteer Link-up – to consider request for donation

After a brief discussion, Council **resolved** to approve a £100 donation to the Volunteer Link-Up charity. The Clerk would prepare a cheque and include it on the list of invoices to be paid.

Action: Clerk to prepare cheque as above.

9.5 Approval of invoices for payment

The Council approved invoices for payment as listed on the invoices for payment sheet distributed with the meeting. Council therefore **resolved** to approve all of the following invoices for payment:

The following invoices are requested to be approved for payment:			
Cheque Number	To whom paid	Details	Amount (£)
102666	JF Gardening & Maintenance	Mowing (May - Sept 2020)	450.00
102667	Lisa Smith	Clerk's salary - November	949.82
102668	The Play Inspection Company Ltd	Play area annual inspection	180.00
102669	Graham Lay	Bench maintenance work	260.00
102770	Volunteer Link Up	Annual donation	100.00 tbc
102771	HMRC	Clerk's NI contributions April - Nov 2020	480.76
		Total:	2,420.58
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 November salary payment.		

9.6 Bench maintenance reports 2020 & 2021 – to review recommendations made in reports x 2

Two bench maintenance reports had been circulated to the Council prior to the meeting for consideration. One report recommended some interim maintenance being carried out on the 10 hardwood benches that were treated in May 2020, with the cost totalling £655. This work was approved by the Council. The second report recommended another round of maintenance on the 10 benches in 2 years' time. As there were parish council elections next year when it was likely there would be new members joining the Council, it was agreed to carry this forward to next year for the new Council to decide. In the meantime, the Clerk would arrange the interim maintenance with the contractor.

Action: Clerk to arrange bench work as above.

9.7 Consideration of Budget and Precept Requirement for 2021/22

Details of expenditure in 2019/20 and to date for 2020/21, together with precept figures for the previous year had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting and were available to councillors at the meeting.

Figures for the budget for 2021/22 were provisionally agreed, totalling **£64,005**, an increase of 1.85% from last year (£62,841).

Particular reference was made to the following items:

ADMINISTRATION ITEMS:

Clerk's Salary – A national pay award of 2.74% had been agreed and been backdated to 1st April 2020. Council **resolved** to increase the budget figure from £11,942 to £12,300 to allow for a potential increase of up to 3%, although it was recognised this may not be the actual salary figure. This would be agreed once the outcome of the national pay negotiations was known next year.

National Insurance Contributions – As the Clerk worked 18 hours per week, she was eligible to pay National Insurance Contributions. £161 had already been paid so far this year, which was from quarter 4 from 2019/20. Employer NI contributions so far for 2020/21 totalled £287.96, up till November, and a cheque for the full amount of £480.76 was due to be paid this month (the remainder being the Employee contributions that were being deducted from the Clerk's salary every month).

The NI Contribution budget was likely to be overspent this year by around £80, but these funds would be available in the Clerk's salary budget as there would be funds left over in this budget at the end of the financial year which would be the NI contributions that had been deducted from her salary. £800 was allocated for this year, and Council therefore agreed to reduce the budgeted figure from £800 to £500 for the coming year.

Pension Contributions – The Clerk also paid Pension Contributions and £544 was budgeted for this last year. £459 had been paid so far this year in Pension Contributions, (of which £221 was the Employer Contribution). An estimated further £132 in total (£75 of which is the Employer Contribution) was due to be paid by the end of the financial year. Again, the Parish Council paid the whole amount to NEST by Direct Debit, and the Employee Pension Contribution was deducted each month from the Clerk's salary. It had become apparent this year that there had been an overpayment in the pension contributions that were being paid and a refund of around £200 was due for this year and around £400 for last year. This meant that this budget would have funds left over at the end of the year, so Council agreed to reduce the allocation from £544 to £200 for the coming year.

Insurance – The insurance budget figure was showing a positive balance of £666 with £2,267 having been spent this year on insurance. It was therefore agreed to keep the budgeted figure at £2,500 to take account of any increases in insurance next year.

Audit fee – The invoice for the audit fee for the 2019/20 audit was still awaited and was anticipated to be £400. Council therefore agreed to keep the audit figure at £400 for the coming year.

Office Equipment – No new equipment was currently required, although the laptop was already 5 years old and it was recognised that it would need replacing at some point in the coming years. The Office Equipment budget was showing a positive balance of £259, so it was agreed to keep the allocation at £100 for the coming year so that funds could be saved for a new laptop.

Training - Clerks and Councillors – No funds had been spent so far this year on training, leaving an unspent balance of £183 in the current year's budget. Council agreed to keep the allocation at £100 to cover any further training for the coming year as with elections next year, it was likely there would be a change in Councillors and new members may require some training.

Hall Hire – The hall hire budget was showing an unspent balance of £215 as meetings were currently being held virtually due to the ongoing pandemic. It was likely that virtual meetings would continue for at least a good few months more, so it was agreed to reduce the budgeted figure for next year from £150 to just £50 which, together with the unspent balance, should cover any hall hire charges for this year and next year.

Elections – The next round of elections were due to be held in 2020, but these had been postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic and would now be held in 2021. It was likely they would be charged for in the 2022/23 budget. The approximate cost would be around £900 based on previous years. The elections budget showed a current balance of £600, so it was agreed to keep the £500 allocation to this budget to start building up funds for 2022/23.

Website/mapping software - £50 was allocated last year to cover the running costs of the website hosting by EverWeb. There was already £138 remaining in the website software budget (although the cost for this year had not yet been paid), so it was agreed to keep the budgeted figure at £50 for the coming year. It had previously been decided not to renew the mapping software, and there was an

unspent balance of £38 in this budget, so it was agreed not to allocate any funds to this budget for the coming year.

Accounts software – There was currently £553 showing in this budget, although the invoice for the accounts software for this year had not yet been paid. The last payment for Scribe was £347 and this was not expected to increase for the coming year. It was therefore agreed to decrease the allocated amount from £400 to £300 for this budget which should still cover next year's annual fee.

Stationery/printer items/postage/notices – The stationery budget showed a positive balance of £153, with no funds having been spent on the printing costs of the APM flyers as the APM wasn't held this year. As the current balance was quite high, it was agreed not to allocate any additional funds for next year as the current balance should cover any expenditure. The printer items budget showed a balance of £127, so it was agreed to reduce the allocation from £100 to £50 to cover any future printer related expenditure such as toner cartridges which were quite expensive. The Postage budget showed a balance of £149 so it was agreed not to allocate any further funds to this budget for the coming year as more and more correspondence was being done via email rather than post.

Notices - The notices budget showed a positive balance of £28, with no funds having been allocated or spent this year. However, it was noted that the printing of notices for the elections next year would be required, so it was agreed to allocate £100 to this budget for the coming year.

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE ITEMS:

Garden of Remembrance Development – £4,998 was currently held in unspent funds in the GOR Development budget. As the Garden was now open for use, further development funds were not felt to be required at the present time, so no further funds were allocated to this budget for the coming year.

Garden of Remembrance Maintenance – £1,183 was currently held in unspent funds in the GOR Maintenance budget, and no funds were allocated to this budget last year. £661 had been spent so far this year and there would be more expenditure on maintenance before the end of the year. It was therefore agreed to allocate £1,000 to this budget for the coming year.

PLAYING FIELD ITEMS:

Play Area Development – The play area development fund currently had £3,068 being held and it was hoped to purchase an additional item of equipment for the toddler play area and make a scooter trail in the near future. The Council were also due to receive £33K of S106 funds from the 41-house development that had just started being built – this could be claimed from WODC by providing quotes/invoices. In view of this Council **resolved** not to include any additional funds to this budget for next year.

Play Area Maintenance - The play area maintenance budget had £1,998 remaining, with further invoices to be paid before the end of the financial year. A new litter bin had been purchased so there would be increased emptying costs. Council agreed to increase the budgeted figure from £500 to £1,000 for the coming year to cover any additional maintenance costs.

Playing Field Maintenance– £9,894 in capital expenditure had been spent so far this year on the new storage shed on the field this year, with a final payment of £2,310 to be paid. Some additional maintenance work on the field had been carried out this year in the form of verti-draining and shockwave treatment, and it was likely the Sports Clubs would request to have this carried out annually to help prevent flooding. The playing field maintenance budget was currently showing a positive balance of £3,171 with the shockwave treatment still to be paid (which would cost around £1,000). Council therefore agreed to allocate £2,500 to this budget for the coming year to cover any additional maintenance costs.

SECTION 137 ITEMS:

Community Responders – As there was £1,400 currently held in reserve, Council **resolved** not to allocate any further funds for the coming year.

Donations given out: This was showing a positive balance of £1,912, and another donation request had been considered and approved at item 9.4. It was therefore agreed to keep the budgeted figure at £1,500 to allow some flexibility to enable other donations to be made if required.

Subscriptions: It was agreed to increase the budgeted figure from £400 to £500 for the coming year to allow for any slight increases to the subscription payments.

Other S137 - £4,029 was currently being held in reserve funds to cover any items that could not be authorised under any other expenditure powers. It was agreed not to allocate any further funds for next year.

Village Shop Start Up – The £1,000 previously held in reserve funds had been donated to the Village Hub group so this budget was now showing a zero balance. It was agreed not to allocate any further funds for the coming year.

VILLAGE HALL/CRF ITEMS:

Servicing Village Hall and CRF Loans – This remained at £5,559 to cover the two fixed payments of £2,779.14 per year made on the loan for the CRF, and the Village Hall figure remained at £23,656 to cover the two fixed payments of £11,827.81 per year made on the loan. These together totalled £29,215 which was allocated for next year.

Village Hall/CRF Maintenance – The allocation was agreed to be kept at £1,500 to cover any maintenance required around the Hall and CRF – this included grass cutting and hedge trimming in this area.

VILLAGE MAINTENANCE ITEMS:

Grass cutting – There was currently £4,653 of unspent funds in this budget, with further invoices to be paid by the end of the financial year. It was agreed to reduce the budgeted figure from £2,000 to £1,000 to cover the grass cutting around the village that was carried out by local contractors.

Litter Collection – Bill Phillips advised the Council that he did not wish to have an increase in his payment so did not leave the meeting for this item. Councillors thanked Bill for this gesture and therefore agreed to keep the payment at £1,000 for the litter collection work done.

Tree work – £1,895 was currently being held in reserve, with no planned tree work to be carried out imminently. Council agreed to keep the allocated amount of £500 to this budget to cover any additional tree work required in the coming year.

Pond Maintenance – No maintenance had been carried out on the pond this year, but it was noted that some bulrush removal work would be required in the Spring. As there was already £2,625 held in reserve funds it was agreed to allocate £500 for the coming year.

Amenity Area – Further work on this area would be required to establish ownership status but this was not felt to be urgent. It was also likely that some work to plant some additional trees and bushes/bulbs would be carried out shortly. As there was currently £1,900 currently held in reserve it was agreed that this was sufficient and so Council agreed not to include any further funds for next year.

Seat Repairs – £1,190 had been spent on bench repairs this year, leaving £72 in the budget with further bench repair work required next year (a report had been received giving details of work required and likely costs). It was therefore agreed to increase the allocated figure from £1,000 to £2,000 for next year to cover the required repairs.

Highways/Footpath maintenance – In view of the likely cuts to services from OCC, and more services like pothole repairs, drain clearance and verge work likely to be devolved out to parish councils, it was agreed to reduce the allocated figure from £1,000 to £500 for the coming year. Although there was £11,708 held in reserve currently, the majority of these funds would be used to cover the costs of two new VAS (vehicle activated sign) that had been purchased (these would cost approximately 8,714), although the invoice had not yet been received.

Dog bin emptying – £169 had been spent on dog bin emptying this year, which covered a 6-month period with further expenditure anticipated by the end of the financial year. There was currently £681 being held in this budget, so Council agreed to reduce the budgeted figure from £500 to £100 to cover these costs.

General Reserves – the general reserves had dropped significantly over the past few years with all the expenditure on the play park and Garden of Remembrance, and with the Clerk's increase in hours and payment of NI & Pension contributions. The amount currently held in general reserves should reflect half of the amount of the half yearly precept figure (i.e. 3 months of Council expenditure) which would be approximately £15,000. £6,000 was allocated to General Reserves last year and has not been used during the year and Council therefore agreed to allocate a further £4,000 to the General Reserves for the coming year to try and build the funds back up.

It was noted that last year, the Parish Council were informed that WODC had overestimated house completions (i.e. the tax base) in two years for 2018-19 and 2019-20, which resulted in the precept figure for 2020-21 showing an increase of 10.5% rather than what was actually budgeted which was an increase of just 1.4%.

Having provisionally now set the precept for next year which shows an increase of 1.85%, it was queried how this would translate when WODC calculate the tax base into the figures. It was agreed to contact WODC and ask them if they knew what the tax base calculation would be for next year.

Action: Clerk to contact WODC to ask re tax base as above.

9.8 To review the effectiveness of internal audit process (to include review of financial system)

The Chairman and Robert were due to carry out the review this year, which needed to be done by the end of January 2021. They would arrange a date to meet with the Clerk in January, although this may have to be done remotely via Zoom.

Action: Chairman and Robert to arrange to meet Clerk to carry out review.

9.9 Any other financial business – none.

10. PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ITEMS

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

10.1.1 Play area reports –barbed wire in hedge behind zip wire; to update on trampoline tile gluing and replacing the back panel of one of the wooden benches

Peter F had the pink book and he would pass it on to Matthew. There were no problems to report. The barbed wire in the hedge behind the zip wire was still to be removed.

The back panel on the wooden bench had been replaced but 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.

Action: Robert to speak to Arthur re removing barbed wire.

10.1.2 New storage building on field – to update on progress on installation of new shed

Robert gave an update. The new shed had been built and was still waiting to have the concrete floor installed. The contractor that the Clerk asked last month did not wish to carry out the work as it was too big a job for them. There were now some other contractors lined up ready to do the work in the next couple of weeks. The door would need to be fixed in around 3 weeks' time.

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 were healthy and being regularly watered and looked after by Robert, and they would be planted when weather conditions allowed, hopefully very soon.

Action: Robert to replace Hornbeam trees on field.

10.1.4 Cricket pitch screens – to discuss if any action is to be taken regarding a suggestion of purchasing some sort of screening to protect houses from cricket balls during the cricket season and to note advice received from OPFA

The Clerk had written to OPFA (Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association) last month and their advice had been emailed around to the Councillors. After a brief discussion, it was felt that it would be impossible to stop cricket balls entering residents' gardens, plus it was not easy (or cheap) to adequately fence off the whole field. It was also noted that since cricket had been played on the field over the years there had been very few complaints overall regarding cricket balls entering gardens. It was agreed to leave it to the Cricket Club to come up with some suggestions that could then be considered further.

10.1.5 Water for cricket square – to consider quote received from Thames Water in relation to a proposal to investigate adding a water supply to the new storage shed to enable sports clubs to use their own water supply

The Clerk had contacted Thames Water to investigate costs for a possible water supply. The quote had been received and stated the cost would be £3,340 + VAT to connect to the water supply in Pigeon House Lane. Council had concerns about the costs being so expensive and considered having a couple of water butts instead that could provide water. It was suggested querying the costs with Thames Water to see if they could somehow be reduced. It was noted that S106 funds could be used to pay for the connection which would be a long-term investment overall.

Action: Clerk to contact Thames Water as above.

10.1.6 Annual inspection report – to discuss and agree any actions arising from inspection report carried out in October

The annual play area inspection report had been received from The Play Inspection Company and had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. Many items identified were for monitoring only or were classed as either low risk or very low risk.

However, the wooden climber equipment with hanging tyres had been identified as a moderate risk item as some of the wooden posts had rotted (2 out of 5 posts) and needed replacing. There was also sign of wear on the ropes and some of the fixings were loose and needed securing, and there were some bolt caps missing or damaged that also needed replacing. It had already previously been agreed to replace this item and ideas were needed as to preferred options. It was agreed to contact the Preschool and place a note on social media to ask parents' thoughts on what they would like to see as a replacement to the Multiplay.

Action: Clerk to contact Preschool and place note on social media.

10.1.7 Northern boundary of playing field (including area behind zip wire) – to discuss how to tidy up this area as a project to develop the whole boundary area

There were lots of plum tree suckers in the area behind the zip wire and along the whole boundary from Blenheim Lane to Pigeon House Lane that needed removing before the area could be improved. It was agreed to ask a local contractor for a quote to clear the area – Tim would provide the contact details for Stephen Sparrowhawk to the Clerk so she could get in touch with him.

It was also suggested asking the owners of Heath Farm to trim the conifers on the playing field side – Robert agreed to speak to them.

Action: Clerk to contact contractor re clearance work, Robert to speak to residents re conifer trees.

10.2 Village Highway Matters – to receive any reports: New salt bin installed by Village Hall

The new salt bin had been installed on the grass verge by the Village Hall.

10.2.1 Traffic calming measures – to receive any update from Traffic Calming Working Group on how to make it less attractive for cars to use Freeland as a cut through, and actually use the new priority road

The Traffic Calming Group had met on 26th October, and a discussion paper had been circulated to the Council with various ideas and suggestions of what could be done in Freeland to help slow the traffic down. These ideas included:

- Having Village Entry Points at A4095 end and at Cuckoo Lane junction which could simply be a change of surface treatment across the road, with posts and a cycle bypass. This would help to deter through traffic.
- Remove centre road line markings within village to emphasize the change in character from “road” to “street”. This should help to slow traffic speeds.
- Make road width appear narrower by a change in material at the sides: A clear width of 6m on straight sections allows two large vehicles to pass at slow speeds. If the edges were paved with a different material a visual width of 5m could be achieved. No speed bumps were needed – just a change in colour or material.
- Create two distinct zones for the centre of the village – one at school and one between the pub and village hall. Again, these didn't need to be raised tabletops, - just a different colour or material – maybe with some additional trees.
- Create more parking laybys protected by low build outs – e.g. by school and Willoughby Fields, which would narrow the road and create a chicane effect if they alternated sides. However, road widths needed to be checked and there was also the constraint of all the individual driveways that open out onto Wroslyn Road, which would leave little space for parallel parking between them.
- Building out corners at junctions could also help slow car speeds and also improve sight lines.

Council were very receptive to the above ideas although it was noted that any parking measures shouldn't interfere with access for cyclists. The next step was to obtain a large scale village map to start planning where would be the best locations to incorporate the above ideas.

Action: Mary Ann to obtain large scale map and traffic calming group to come up with some recommendations.

10.2.2 Freeland Speedwatch – to receive an update on when Speedwatch activities can resume

The Council had been advised that Speedwatch activities were now able to resume and the local Speedwatch Team had confirmed they would restart their checks in the village.

10.2.3 Overgrown hedge in Broadmarsh Lane – to discuss any action that may be taken regarding an overgrown laurel hedge on unregistered land in Broadmarsh Lane

Concerns had been raised by a resident regarding the large laurel hedge that runs opposite the terraced houses in Broadmarsh Lane. It was cut back a couple of years ago by a resident, however parts of the hedge were encroaching onto the road making it difficult for two cars to pass each other (or emergency vehicles). Highways had been contacted previously about this hedge, and they had confirmed that they do not generally maintain hedges as they are normally considered a boundary feature. They went on to advise that it is accepted in highway related common law that, historically, hedges were planted to enclose the neighbouring land from the adjacent highway, and therefore are considered the responsibility of the adjacent landowner to maintain. In this case, the hedge on Broadmarsh lane is the boundary feature and as such maintainable by the adjacent landowner and not by the county council in its capacity as local highway authority, It was therefore agreed to write a polite letter asking the adjacent landowner if they could cut back the hedge.

Action: Clerk to write letter as above.

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.

10.3.1 Slow Ways – to discuss a request to support the Slow Ways initiative

Some brief information together with a request for the Parish Council to support the Slow Ways initiative had been received the day before the meeting. Slow Ways was an initiative to create a comprehensive network of walking routes that connects all of Britain's cities, towns and villages.

Action: Chairman to seek further information about Slow Ways initiative which could be discussed at the next meeting.

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

Tim had made a start on replacing the box hedging and would carry on with this work. He was going to try and get up there in the next week or so to finish off.

As reported last month the GOR gates needed some attention, mainly painting and the top bar was rotten although still felt to be ok. Robert advised he had another set of gates which unfortunately were not quite wide enough, although if 2 additional gate posts were fitted then they could be used. He would circulate some pictures of the gates to the Councillors. Alternatively, some metal gates could be used so that there would be very little maintenance going forward.

Action: Tim to continue with various jobs at GOR. Robert to circulate pictures of gates to Councillors.

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.

10.6 Amenity Area – to review reinstatement of ground works following fence installation at nearby property and to discuss hedge planting and other development work, plus to note concerns raised by resident

The fence by Broadview had been reinstated in the correct position and a report proposing some planting of trees and hedging in the amenity area had been circulated to Councillors for their consideration. Other tidying up work was suggested at the last meeting, plus some additional planting of bulbs etc. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to ask a local contractor for a quote to remove the old cherry trees and prune back some of the branches to tidy the area. It was suggested the contractor could meet Mary Ann or Robert on site to discuss the work.

Following on from the concerns raised about the oak tree last month, another resident contacted the Council to raise further concerns about the oak trees. Following an email conversation, the Council provisionally agreed that one oak tree may be removed but the other must remain. No further contact had been received from the residents.

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

(a) OALC October update – details emailed around

(b) Memorial Trees – to review and discuss if any action necessary on wobbly post on memorial tree at The Green. It had been reported that the post on the memorial tree on the Green for Basil Taunton was wobbly and in a poor state of repair. Some photos of the post had been emailed around. Concerns had also been raised about the scrub around the tree and that the area needs some attention to ensure it is well maintained in respect of the fallen. It was agreed to ask a local contractor to replace the post and then the area around the tree would be tidied up.

Action: Clerk to ask local contractor (Graham Lay) to replace post.

(c) Eynsham Consolidated Charity – to confirm Mike Foster's re-appointment to serve as a trustee on the Eynsham Consolidated Charity as representative of the Parish Council for a further 4 years. Mike Foster's appointment to the above charity was due to expire on 17 January 2021. Mike had expressed his wish to continue as a trustee and Council therefore **resolved** to approve his re-appointment for a further 4 years.

(d) OCC - Eynsham A40 Park and Ride & Bus Lanes project update – details had been emailed around but it was agreed to carry this item forward to next month to allow sufficient time to study the documents.

Action: Clerk to carry item forward to next meeting.

Plus additional item received since meeting papers were sent out:

(e) Inspired Villages – to note proposals for new development and details being placed in Grapevine with very tight consultation timings. A plan was shown to the Councillors that had literally been received in the past few days. The new development proposals were for a retirement village that would include a number of other facilities including a swimming pool, sauna, shop, café, hair salon, which could be shared facilities with the village. Details were being placed in the Grapevine this month and the developer was planning on doing a leaflet drop to the village to gain their thoughts. It was agreed not to offer any comments at this time, until the village had had time to see the plans and feedback their thoughts.

12. CIRCULATION

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

13. TO RECEIVE A MONTHLY UPDATE REGARDING FREELAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

There was nothing to report this month.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – FOR PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ONLY

None.

15. 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 21st December at 7.30pm.**

There being no other business the meeting closed at 10.23pm.