

## **FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF FREELAND PARISH COUNCIL, HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM DUE TO THE ONGOING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ON THE 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020, IN THE COUNTY OF OXFORDSHIRE AT 7.45PM.**

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Chairman:	Peter Newell
	Vice-Chairman:	Robert Crocker
	Councillors:	Mary Ann Canning, Tim Webster, Peter Foster(from 8.10pm), Matthew Ruddle, Véro McCoy, Bill Phillips.
	District Councillors:	Alaa Al-Yousuf (till 9.30pm) Merilyn Davies (till 8.35pm)
	County Councillor:	Not present.
	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 – Liam Walker**

#### **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.

Tim Webster (personal) as having a local business.

Matthew Ruddle (personal) as caretaker of the Little Free Library and as a member of 1<sup>st</sup> Hanborough/Freeland Scouts Committee.

#### **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

##### **4.1 To approve and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> March were approved and signed by the Chairman 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**

Peter F gave a brief report. The site at Whitehouse Farm was still being explored and the landlord's approval had now been obtained. A multi-skills site visit would be carried out in the coming weeks. Peter 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 Little Free Library – to update on progress in transforming phone box into a new library**

Matthew gave a brief report. Both libraries had been closed during the Covid-19 lockdown but had reopened 2 weeks ago and were now running as normal.

### **6.4 Actions arising from the Coronavirus epidemic – to receive an update**

The Clerk gave a brief update. An update on the activities carried out since the last meeting had been emailed around to Councillors to keep them informed. A central telephone helpline had been set up and was working well. Residents could obtain help with food shopping by phoning the local shop (Co-op) and groceries could be delivered to their door. Street Champions had been set up for all roads in the village and over 120 volunteers had signed up to help, which was more than needed but was a great response. Volunteers were collecting prescriptions on behalf of residents who were contacting the helpline, with two bulk collections being carried out a week, and this was also working well. Over 1,000 home deliveries of grocery shopping had been carried out since the lockdown by the team of volunteers, and the Co-op were keen to continue the service until September. However, Marilyn advised that this needed to be reviewed as the van used for deliveries had been loaned to the group from Blenheim and would need to be given back at some point. Plus, there were things like fuel expenses to consider plus the constant need for volunteers willing to carry out the deliveries twice a day. The Parish Council also needed to review when to cease the prescription service, and central helpline as this was only ever meant as an emergency measure, and as restrictions eased this would gradually be reduced. Council agreed to keep it going for the current time and review again next month.

It was suggested the Parish Council could possibly apply for a grant to cover costs during the Covid-19 outbreak – Marilyn agreed to send some details to the Clerk.

The Clerk also updated the Council about a local resident who was making fabric face masks as part of The Big Community Sew project and would be having a pop-up stall in the village each week. There was no charge but donations to a charity could be made.

## **7. PLANNING - Applications received & WODC Decisions plus:**

### **7.1 Applications Received: None.**

### **7.2 Applications Approved:**

#### **20/00586/HHD**

##### **69 WROSLYN ROAD, FREELAND.**

Erection of single storey front extension and detached garage with home office above for Mr Simon Horner (revised plans from withdrawn application number 19/03528/HHD).

#### **20/00634/HHD**

##### **THE HAVEN, 61 WROSLYN ROAD, FREELAND.**

Alterations and erection of two-storey side and rear extension for Mr Stephen Ebbs.

#### **20/00679/HHD**

##### **5 HURST LANE, FREELAND.**

Convert store to bedroom/study with en-suite for Mr & Mrs Tom & Vero McCoy.

#### **19/03419/HHD**

##### **176 WROSLYN ROAD, FREELAND.**

Erection of single storey side extension for Mr James Eaton.

#### **19/03370/FUL**

##### **FREELAND HOUSE, WROSLYN ROAD, FREELAND.**

Construction of three timber cabins for use as staff accommodation for Mr Mahesh Patel.

#### **20/00860/HHD**

##### **185 WROSLYN ROAD, FREELAND.**

Erection of single storey front extension for Mr & Mrs Pinkney.

Plus one further application had been approved after the meeting papers had been sent out:

#### **20/00510/FUL**

##### **FREELAND PLAYING FIELD, WROSLYN ROAD, FREELAND.**

Erection of replacement storage building for Mrs Mary Ann Canning.

### **7.3 Applications Refused: None.**

**7.4 Applications Withdrawn: None.**

**7.5 Applications Awaiting Decision: None.**

## **8. REPORT OF COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL BUSINESS**

Merilyn advised that she was still trying to find out what was happening with the Mears New Homes site on the A4095 where building work appeared to have ceased. It was hoped that the site could possibly be sold on so that the building work could eventually be completed rather than having a half-finished site just left. She would update the Council as soon as she had found out more information. The S106 funds for this site had been triggered by the first occupants, who were now in place, so WODC had been contacted and had confirmed receipt of the S106 funds from the builder. These funds would then be passed to OCC so that a new bus shelter could be provided at the bus stop nearest to the development on the A4095. It was also agreed that the Clerk would deliver some welcome packs to the new residents on site there.

Merilyn was thanked for attending and then left the meeting at 8.35pm.

Alaa gave a couple of updates including the Comet Bus and the fact that Covid-19 was causing economic damage to the local and national economy. WODC were working extremely hard to support those in need and to provide emergency services where required. Lots of Covid-19 briefings had been sent out to parishes and communities to keep them updated with the services available and how to access support.

## **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 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and the receipts and payments received or paid out in the last two months since the beginning of the financial year. The Clerk had also emailed the Councillors with details of the cheques that had been paid since the March meeting under the powers given to her at the March meeting. The bank statement was checked as agreeing with the figures on the finance sheet and would be signed by Matthew outside of the meeting.

### **9.2 Presentation of the final annual accounts and the annual accounts notes**

The notes that accompanied the draft final annual accounts were presented to the Council showing three overspends at the end of the financial year. These were for National Insurance contributions, Pension Contributions and Registration Fees. Whilst the National Insurance and Pension Contributions budget both showed overspends, and therefore a negative balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March, this was counterbalanced with an underspend in the Clerk's salary budget whereby these deductions had been made from her salary. The Clerk would investigate how to correct this in Scribe, which may possibly involve split coding her salary in Scribe going forward. The Registration Fees for the Information Commissioner's office had been precepted for 2020-21 so this would be corrected this year. This was all duly noted and accepted by the Council.

### **9.3 Village Hall Insurance Renewal – to approve the insurance renewal premium for the Village Hall & changing rooms – details emailed around**

Allied Westminster had confirmed the insurance renewal premium for the Village Hall and CRF to be **£1,232.43** (£1,258.94 last year).

The current long-term agreement was due to expire on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 and the renewal premium quoted included a discount for the policy being subject to a new 3-year long-term agreement being taken out.

If a 1-year long term agreement was preferred, the renewal premium would be **£1,295.66**, or a 5-year agreement was also available, whereby the renewal premium would reduce to **£1,207.14**.

If the Council decides to enter another long-term agreement, it would receive a discount each year for agreeing to stay with Allied Westminster for a 3 or 5-year term.

The buildings sum insured had been index linked by 1.6% and the contents sum by 0.7% this year. Despite increasing the sums insured in line with index linking, Allied Westminster advised that the

overall premium was lower than it had been for the past 2 years to help out employers during this difficult time with the Coronavirus pandemic. The public liability limit indemnity had remained at the current level at £10,000,000. The renewal premium included cover for Trustee indemnity at £250,000.

After a brief discussion, Council **resolved** to approve the insurance renewal premium of **£1,207.14** from Allied Westminster, and to enter into a new **5-year** long-term agreement. The Clerk had also scanned the insurance renewal documents and sent them to the Village Hall Management Committee Chairman and Treasurer to confirm that the indemnity limits and contents cover were adequate – confirmation had been received that the current cover did not need to be amended.

**Action:** Clerk to renew insurance policy as above.

**9.4 Annual donations - To approve annual donations to village clubs and groups as per the ones listed on the Correspondence Sheet, and to consider donation request from Oxfordshire Association for the Blind**

Annual donations were normally given to the following village groups each year:

Freeland Parochial Church Council - £500 towards the upkeep of the St Mary's Churchyard;

Freeland Grapevine - £100 donation towards the printing of the Grapevine;

Long Hanborough Day Centre - £80 donation towards their work providing a day centre to help the elderly with social interaction/lunch etc.

Council **resolved** to approve donations to the clubs as listed above and cheques had been prepared for signing.

A request for a donation had also been received from the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind who currently supported 3,978 visually impaired people across the county. Their aim was to make sure that everyone with a visual impairment is connected to their local community. After a brief discussion, Council **resolved** that (in line with previous policy) they would not offer a donation as no identifiable benefits to residents of the Village had been identified.

**9.5 Annual audit – To receive an update on the annual audit for 2019/20, and to approve Section 1 and Section 2 of Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2019/20**

The Clerk had been busy preparing for the annual audit. The internal auditor was due to inspect the books the following day, and therefore this item would be carried forward to the next meeting when the AGAR could then be approved as the internal audit report would be available.

**Action:** Item to be carried forward to next meeting.

**9.6 Standing Orders - To approve the adoption of the amended Standing Orders dated April 2020 to reflect changes in the law following the new Coronavirus Act 2020 and associated 2020 Regulations**

Amended Standing Orders were emailed around to all Councillors on 15<sup>th</sup> May for their perusal. The main changes come in light of the new Coronavirus Act 2020 in relation to allowing Parish Councils to hold meetings remotely and how voting etc should take place. Council **resolved** to approve the adoption of the amended Standing Orders dated April 2020 with immediate effect.

**9.7 Approval of invoices for payment**

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

payment:

Cheque Number	To whom paid	Details	Amount (£)
102634	Freeland Nurseries	Gravel, plants and watering can for GOR	68.78
102635	Lisa Smith	Refund - expenses Zoom sign up fee/Central help	122.11
102636	Lisa Smith	Clerk's salary June	902.57
102637	Allied Westminster	Village Hall insurance renewal	tbc
102638	Freeland Grapevine	Annual donation	100.00
102639	Freeland Parochial Church Council	Annual donation	500.00
102640	Hanborough Day Centre	Annual donation	80.00
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,773.46</b>
<b>Plus:</b>	NEST pension payment of £67.64 (employee & employer contributions). £38.65 has been deducted from Clerk's salary for June salary payment. Local Government pay award negotiations not finalised yet so Clerk's salary has remained unchanged.		

## 9.8 Any other financial business – none.

## 10. PARISH COUNCIL STANDING ITEMS

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

Matthew had the pink book and no safety checks had been carried out whilst the play areas were closed due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. At the time of the meeting the restrictions on play areas had not been lifted so the play equipment remained out of use. However, checks were still required on the defibrillators, so Matthew agreed to check them both.

**Action:** Matthew to check both defibrillators.

#### 10.1.1 Play area reports – to update on trampoline tile gluing

This had not been done as yet but Mary Ann hoped to get this done at the same time as when the new safety surfacing was installed.

**Action:** Mary Ann to glue tile. Robert to provide temporary fencing around trampoline if needed.

#### 10.1.2 New storage building on field – to update on progress of planning application submission/feedback plus to notes objections received

Mary Ann gave an update. Confirmation had been received that afternoon that the planning application had been approved by WODC and Councillors congratulated Mary Ann on all her efforts in getting this through. The new location at the bottom corner of the field had been approved and the residents in the neighbouring properties were also happy with the new layout/location.

The specifications for the base needed clarifying, and Mary Ann and Robert would cost up the groundworks together. Mary Ann had also met with the Sports Clubs and a few suggestions had been put forward by them regarding drainage, the possibility of having a water supply to the building and having solar panels on the roof. The actual shed could now be ordered and the suggestions from the Sports Clubs would be looked at in due course.

Council passed on their thanks to Mary Ann and Tim for all the work they had done on getting to this stage.

**Action:** Mary Ann and Robert to cost groundworks, and Clerk to order shed. Mary Ann to also finalise base specification with Tim/Robert.

#### 10.1.3 Picnic bench on field – to receive an update from Picnic Bench Working Group re installation of benches and the siting of picnic tables near the Village Hall

Following the resident's complaint regarding picnic tables and the decision at the March meeting to carry on and install the picnic tables, a letter from Bower and Bailey solicitors had been received regarding the resident's ongoing concerns about installing two picnic tables. The reasons already given for their concerns were reinforced in the letter, although benches were deemed an acceptable compromise and a donation was also offered towards them.

After further consideration, Council decided to install two timber benches near the wooden climbing equipment. The two new picnic tables that had already been purchased would be installed near the Newell Room for the Sports Clubs and users of the Hall/changing rooms to use. It was also suggested installing an additional trampoline adjacent to the existing one using the S106 funds as an addition to the existing contract with Sawscapes, and a quote for this had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting (approx. £4K). Council **resolved** to approve the purchase of the additional trampoline which Councillors felt would be a welcome addition to the play area.

**Action:** Mary Ann to arrange work with Sawscapes, Clerk to write to residents re outcome.

#### **10.1.4 Tractor – to update on getting a winter service carried out**

Robert had not had chance to contact the company regarding the quote, but Simon Hole had offered to arrange this on the Council's behalf. This had been agreed and the service would be carried out shortly.

#### **10.1.5 Replacement of Hornbeam trees on the playing field – to update on replacement of the dead Hornbeam trees on the playing field**

Two of the trees had been removed and the third would be done shortly. All 3 replacement trees were healthy and being regularly watered and looked after by Robert, and they would be planted when weather conditions allowed.

**Action:** Robert to replace Hornbeam trees on field.

#### **10.2 Village Highway Matters – to receive any reports**

##### **10.2.1 Highways reports: various dog related complaints (dog's mess, aggressive dogs)**

Various dog related complaints and concerns had been raised in the past couple of months regarding dog's mess and aggressive dogs. The Clerk had placed a note in the Grapevine and on social media about people clearing up after their pets and had contacted the local PCSO regarding anything that could be done about the aggressive dogs.

The loose kerb stones near 42 Church View needed checking to see if they had been fixed – the Clerk would take a look.

**Action:** Clerk to check kerb stones as above.

##### **10.2.2 Parking near the Church – to discuss any response from Witney Town Charity re suggestion of leasing their field as a temporary car park and planting trees on their land**

The Clerk had chased this up again this month but there was nothing further to report.

##### **10.2.3 Comet Bus – to receive an update on the possible co-funding with OCC for a Freeland to Witney Comet Bus service**

The Chairman and Alaa attended a meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March with OCC to discuss a possible Comet Bus service providing a Freeland to Witney service and a bid had since been submitted. OCC were apparently willing to roll over some funding for a Freeland to Witney service provided there was co-funding from the parish council and/or users. (or if the service were to serve Freeland and other villages, such as Stanton Harcourt and Standlake).

##### **10.2.4 Pigeon House Lane – to receive an update on any action to be taking to stop HGVs driving down this lane (change of signage, blocking lane etc)**

Liam was going to add this to his list for investigation/ consultation – Council agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting when it was hoped Liam could provide an update.

**Action:** Clerk to carry item forward to next meeting.

##### **10.2.5 Village benches maintenance programme – to note maintenance report schedule received (x 2), and to discuss whether Council wish to proceed with any of the work suggested either in Autumn this year or next year**

The remaining agreed bench maintenance work had been carried out by a local contractor and the invoice for this had now been paid. Two further maintenance report schedules had been received regarding suggested work to be carried out in the Autumn and next year. The maintenance schedule for the Autumn totalled £260, and Council resolved to approve this expenditure. The work for next year would be looked at the November budget setting meeting as funds would need to be put aside for this work.

**Action:** Clerk to arrange Autumn bench work with local contractor.

##### **10.2.6 Electric bus – to note joint application (with Hanborough PC) has been made for an electric bus to serve Freeland and Hanborough and to consider offering support to the application should this be requested**

Alaa gave an update regarding the electric bus, for which a joint application with Hanborough PC had not actually been made. An expression of interest had been made, however there appeared to be a number of discrepancies regarding what had been submitted and what the community bus volunteer group were supporting and what they deemed to be feasible. It was suggested therefore inviting

Peter Leigh, the Parish Transport Representative to the next meeting to perhaps provide further information and clarity. This was agreed and the Clerk would invite Peter to the next virtual meeting.  
**Action:** Clerk to invite Parish Transport Rep to next meeting.

Alaa was then thanked for attending and left the meeting at 9.30pm.

#### **10.2.7 20mph zones – to consider whether PC support would be offered to having certain 20mph zones in the village**

As Liam was not present, it was agreed to carry this item forward till the next meeting when it was hoped he could provide an update.

**Action:** Clerk to carry item forward to next meeting.

#### **10.3 Footpath & Bridleway matters/Footpath Book – to receive any reports: gate off hinges and broken plank on stile both on FP6**

The gate on FP6 was off the hinges – Robert agreed to take a look. The Clerk had checked the stile on FP6 and everything seemed to be in order. It was believed Robert had the book so this now needed passing to Tim.

**Action:** Robert to pass book to Tim and check gate on FP6.

#### **10.3.1 Footpath/cycleway funding – to note new Government funding available to improve footpaths and cycleways and to discuss which ones to be given priority**

An email had been received from Robert Courts regarding some new Government funding available to improve footpaths and cycleways. A suggestion was made of making all the kerbs dropped along Wroslyn Road or to convert Pigeon House Lane to a cycleway and access only road for traffic. Councillors were asked to submit their ideas and suggestions to Liam.

**Action:** Councillors to feedback ideas to Liam.

#### **10.4 Garden of Remembrance – to receive any reports**

No reports had been received.

##### **10.4.1 To receive an update on the outstanding archway work**

The Sawmill had ceased trading but the initial outstanding archway work had been completed by Lee Hyatt and the invoice for the work had been paid. It was suggested the odd outstanding bits of work could be done by Russ Canning, he just needed to source some oak. Council agreed Russ could carry out the odd bits of outstanding work.

**Action:** Mary Ann to arrange last bits of archway work with Russ.

##### **10.4.2 To update on the progress to review the GOR rules and consider some slight alterations to wording with regards to plot sizes/locations**

Following on from last month, it had become apparent that it may be necessary to amend the wording of the GOR rules in relation to sizes of stone tablets and options to choose plots. The GOR Working Group would arrange a virtual meeting and review the rules and report back to the Council. It was suggested using Word 'track changes' as an easy way to do this.

**Action:** Mary Ann to arrange virtual meeting of GOR Working Group re reviewing rules, Clerk to attend.

#### **10.5 Freeland Hall Management Committee – to receive any reports**

There was nothing much to report. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Hall had been closed, and various maintenance work had been carried out. The Committee were currently working on what measures would need to be put in place once the Hall was able to be re-opened.

##### **10.5.1 To update on installation bike racks by the Village Hall**

The bike racks had been removed from Blenheim Lane and were due to be installed by the boot wash near the village hall imminently.

**Action:** Robert to install bike racks by the Village Hall.

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

(a) OALC – March, April & May updates – details had been emailed around.

(b) Letter from Ubico re disruption to some services – details had been emailed around.

(c) Various Coronavirus updates from OCC, WODC, OPFA, CFO – details had been emailed around.

Plus, additional items received since agenda sent out:

(d) Yoga on playing field – request received to hold ad hoc yoga sessions on field – Council approved this request to hold ad hoc yoga sessions on the playing field.

(e) Mears Homes payment of S106 funds – confirmation received of payment of S106 funds from Mears to WODC for bus shelter on A4095 – details had been emailed around.

## **12. CIRCULATION**

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

## **13. TO RECEIVE A MONTHLY UPDATE REGARDING FREELAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

The Clerk gave a brief update. All teachers and children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 had returned to school, together with keyworker's children. Various social distancing measures were in place including staggered arrival and finish times and keeping children in small groups. There was no news as to when the other year groups would be returning so remote learning was taking place for the rest of the children.

## **14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – FOR PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ONLY**

Farmer's Market – a reminder was given about the upcoming Farmer's Market that was due to be held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June in the village hall car park.

Water for cricket square – it was suggested adding to the next agenda a proposal to investigate adding a water supply to the new storage shed so that the sports clubs (in particular the cricket club) could use their own water supply to water the cricket square. The Clerk would add this to the next agenda.

**Action:** Clerk to add to agenda as above.

Cake café/cream teas – permission was sought as to whether the field could be used for people to sit outside when cream teas were provided in the Hall by the Cake Café – this was agreed.

Face Masks – the Clerk also updated the Council regarding a local resident who was making face masks free of charge. The resident would be setting up a pop-up stall in the village and was asking for volunteers to help sew the masks. A note had been placed in the Grapevine about this new initiative called The Big Community Sew.

## **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 20<sup>th</sup> July** at 7.30pm.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 10.00pm.