

West Ilsley Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting Monday 9th September 2013

Present: Sean Ryan, Alan Bloor, Rollo Duckworth, Dries Hagen, Jo Scriven, John Mountford, Alan Beaumont and Alison Banks. 25 members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence
Anna Sugden
2. To receive any changes to Declarations
None received.
3. To receive and if approved confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held Monday 8th July 2013.
Signed as a true record.
4. Matters Arising – to be taken in the meeting
5. Correspondence received – Donation request
6. Village Hall Update

Steve Cobrin addressed the Council and confirmed that a new group/committee have formed. There are 3 candidates for the elected positions and 4-5 village representatives plus 2 members. They met briefly and will meet again to finalise positions and start proactively managing the Village Hall. Cllr Duckworth will attend as the Parish Councillor. The Chairman thanked all volunteers. Sandra Turner briefly summarised her wish to hire the Hall for use as a Pre-school and after-school club. This was an exciting opportunity and would significantly improve the Hall's income stream.

7. Village Funding

Andrea Cook summarised her document (previously in WIN) which had drawn together figures from the key 6 Village groups. They had provided their income and costs and future spend on maintenance/essential projects. All were “surviving” based on income and fundraisers but this would be difficult to sustain, as many had no “sinking funds” in place. The Village Hall and Church were most in need with large essential maintenance projects now urgent.

One idea was to increase the fund raising and another to ask for a larger precept from West Berkshire Council.

Our village precept is £2515, which has been frozen for 7 years. It is the lowest of all Downland Villages. It is collected via the council tax and equals about £20 per year per household. Virtually all of this is spent each year on essentials. To help out all the organisations with their future essential maintenance (about £70k plus their regular deficit of £7.5k/year), up to £13/mth or £150 per year could be added to each household's council tax bill for the next 10years.

On the other hand, leaving it to fundraising would mean further expense for the regular attendees (about 60 in the village), who tirelessly organise the events and attend each one. It was questionable if the village and the villagers would want a large increase in the number and frequency of fundraisers. Many were sympathetic to this cause.

A lively discussion took place and the majority were not opposed to a rise (no decision on how much) in the precept. Similarly most valued the village assets and would want them to be maintained. They also valued and enjoyed the fundraisers but thought that it would be better if they were used for funding “bonus items” and not essentials.

It was agreed that Andrea’s work would be extended and the figures confirmed. The request for our precept must be with West Berkshire Council by the end of January. The Chairman thanked all for their contributions and commented on the 5fold increase in attendance! It was also clarified that any precept decision would be taken by the Councillors at the January meeting. There would be no village vote. Discussions would continue at the next meeting.

8. Community led plan

Last meeting Tessa Hall introduced the Community Led Plan, which follows on from the Parish Plan, which many villages have completed. In West Ilsley we are part way to completing our Parish Plan (now to be known as Community Led Plan).

In short West Ilsley have a completed questionnaire and have conducted consultation with the village. Tessa urged us to progress and draw up an action plan containing several SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time appropriate) objectives. This, together with the questionnaire results and some village detail could be submitted to West Berks Council as our Community Led Plan. In addition we would need an active Plan team to progress our objectives. Tessa confirmed that up to £5K was available each year for objectives acceptable to them.

All agreed that this was an excellent target and a small Plan Team was formed as follows: (Ideally 2-3 Parish Councillors and 3 villagers)
Rollo Duckworth, Anna Sugden, Tony Elliott, Ian Fewtrell-Smith and Steve Cobrin.

Projects being considered for the Action Plan : Village Hall modernisation, A Church project, Play Area – additional equipment, tennis court tree removal/new hedging/wind break plus others as detailed in the questionnaire

Anna Sugden offered to set up the first meeting.

9. Broadband Improvements

No further progress since the last meeting - Steve Cobrin reported that the budget for the whole Superfast Broadband project has risen to £4m. It will now need to be re-tendered which will set back the project deadline by 2 months. Still hoping for some results by 2015.

10. Transport and Safety

Pressure was still being put on the Highways committee to consider moving the 30mph up the hill and moving the 30 illuminated sign to the bottom of the hill. Cllr Mountford and Tony Elliott were progressing.

The recent road surfacing was discussed and there were still several issues to do with: White line painting, replacing kerbstones, sweeping up of chippings and repairing potholes. The Clerk with Cllr Bloor would write to Highways to check that these issues were being addressed.

11. Environmental matters

None raised.

12. Cricket/Play Area/Tennis Club

Juliet Ryder spoke for the Play Area and her intention to buy some more bark and look into bird deterrents. All were in favour. She also had a longer term plan to add a new piece of equipment. Funds would come from a recent successful fundraiser plus the money ring fenced in the PC account. She would check with RoSPA that all purchases met their standards.

13. Accounts for payment/receipts received

The accounts had been approved by the Auditors.

14. West Ilsley Trust – requests for donations

A request from The Autumn Group (over 55s) who meet in Compton and gather people from many Downland villages. We offered £50, proposed by Cllr Ryan and Seconded by Cllr Bloor. The Clerk would raise a cheque. Cllr Bloor had asked them to consider returning to West Ilsley Village Hall, once the heating issues had been resolved.

15. Planning Applications

None on going.

16. AOB

17. Open Forum

Fireworks – James Hanbury has kindly offered his field. Cllr Ryan and all assembled thanked him very much. David Carlisle offered his assistance moving the wood pile, Tony on fireworks. Richard Gore had offered for the fireworks to be laid and set off from his field. Many thanks to all.

The next meeting is on Monday November 11th in the Village Hall at 7.30pm.