

PAWLETT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Held virtually via the Zoom platform on Monday 3rd August 2020, commencing at 7.00pm
(Minutes in the format to be presented at the next meeting for approval)

Present:

Cllrs W Barnard (Chair), A Warner (Vice-chair), A Baker, J Kingman, M Thomas
C Morrison-Jones (clerk)
1 x members of the public

Public speaking:

- Agenda Item 5 (Highways) – 2 Blocked Drains between Old Main Road and Vicarage Lane were reported to Highways last week.
- Agenda Item 5 (Highways) – Overhanging Brambles/Branches and Vegetation along A38 footpath between Vicarage Lane to the bottom of the hill was reported to Highways about a month ago. Three weeks ago, the pavement was marked with the usual red arrows for action, but to date this has not been dealt with.
- Agenda Item 3, Minute 5 – Hedgerow. There is a need to establish ownership.
- Agenda Item 8 – Planning. Interested why the PC have supported planning application 41/20/00008

1. To receive any apologies for absence and disclosures of interest

Cllr M Smith sent apologies of absence due to delayed travel plans.

2. County and District Councillor Reports

None received.

3. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 29th June 2020

The minutes were approved by Members for signature by the Chairman as a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The minutes will be signed when the Parish Council next meet in person.

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting:

a) Teak bench on the Green

WB reported that he treated the bench 2 or 3 years ago with a 10-year wood preserver treatment as requested at the time. Following internet research by WB, advice is that its life will be shortened if treatments are used on the bench and that teak furniture should be allowed to develop its natural patina in order to maintain its longevity.

Councillors agreed to leave the bench as it is and not to carry out any treatment; however if anybody comes forward with specialist advice to the contrary, they would be happy to reconsider.

b) Hedge overhanging Gaunts Road associated with 24 Pound Road

The response from Highways to the Parish Council on 28th July confirmed that the site has been inspected and the reported vegetation appears to have already been cut back.

MT reported that the new boundary fence has been placed well back from the hedge leaving a 'no mans' land and the boundary unclear. Councillors resolved to leave as a watching brief and to report the matter to Highways again if gets out of hand.

c) Parking Old Main Road / Monmouth Farm Close junction

The clerk reported that, despite again contacting Highways (and cc'ing Cllrs M Healey and J Woodman) no response or feedback had been received. Councillors and parishioners were requested to keep taking photographs of poor parking and email them to the clerk in order to build a portfolio of photos and incidents / near misses.

d) Any other matters arising from the minutes not covered by the agenda items below

None

5. Roads and Footpaths:

a) Ragwort in the parish

Concerns about ragwort in the parish, particularly on the proposed community land behind the Pavilion and on verges, has been raised with WB by a parishioner. It was thought that Mrs Parish still owns the community land so that area would remain her liability. WB offered to speak to the Parish's and request that it is controlled.

Councillors were enthusiastic of WB suggestion to try and co-ordinate the community help of ragwort picking that had been offered. The clerk reminded councillors that if such activities are carried out under the umbrella of the Parish Council then H&S of the volunteers would have to be considered and appropriate PPE provided as the toxins in ragwort can be absorbed through the skin. WB and JK offered to take the reins on this and move forward with trying to set up ragwort pulling groups focusing on verges / public land in the parish.

b) Any other matters concerning Highways or Footpaths

Overgrowth along A38 footway as raised by the member of public present. The clerk was requested to write to Highways.

6. Play area and outdoor gym

a) Further consider the possible reopening of play areas and outdoor gym

WB reported that SDC play areas are open with appropriate signage (photograph of signage sent to Members)

The clerk had previously reported to councillors electronically that no definitive advice or regulations had been received from the PCs insurers beyond the guidance published by the Government and the need to carry out a fully documented risk assessment of the areas, which includes the risks posed by corona virus.

It was noted that the Pavilion reopens on Friday; councillors agreed that it makes sense to re-open in line with this.

The clerk advised that full written risk assessment needed to be carried out before reopening, together with the erection of appropriate signage for users

It was agreed that the clerk would resend send template / example risk assessments to WB to allow him to visit the three areas and complete the required risk assessments. It was also agreed to use the signage wording used by SDC; AB offered to print out and laminate the notices for all 3 areas.

AW will check over the equipment before re-opening and grease gun / WD40 / adjust any items that require attention and will restart the routine weekly inspections that were suspended during the covid induced closure.

b) Consider the annual play area and outdoor gym inspection reports

The annual inspection was carried out during lockdown. AW noted that all the points raised in the reports are low risk, there are no medium or high-risk items that require urgent attention.

AB suggested that the single plank seat on Green needs evaluating for rotting, AW agreed to evaluate it as part of his re-opening inspection of the area.

JK wanted to thank AW on behalf of the PC for his regular maintenance of these areas; the reports endorse that a good job is being done as there are no significant issues to be concerned about.

7. **Somerset Unitary Authority; report from Cllr Warner on a meeting hosted by SALC**

AW reported that the event was primarily an opportunity for Cllr D Fothergill, leader of SCC to promote the benefits of forming a unitary, with the following significant points to be noted by Councillors:

- District councils are responding to the business case by 1st Sept, so are re-engaged with the situation.
- If unitary does happen there is a plan that there will be neighbourhood communities ...this will not be entirely consisting of parish councils but it is unclear yet how much responsibility will be pushed onto parish councils.
- PPC needs to wait for further developments – a formal consultation will happen in due course.

8. **Planning:**

a) **Consider the application for a new premises licence (under the Licensing Act 2003)**

Pawlett Royal British Legion Club Limited, 29 Old Main Road, Pawlett,

No members had any concerns, and the Parish Council resolved to support the application: the Legion is a valuable and important part of the local community. As a parish council, Members have no concerns over their operation and wish them well for the future

b) **For report: planning applications responded to under delegated powers since the last meeting.**

The following applications have been responded to by the clerk since the last meeting under delegated powers following electronic consultation with Members:

i) Application 41/20/00008. Temporary erection of a timber lodge to be used as a key workers dwelling for a fish farming enterprise. Support
In response to the query raised in public speaking, AW expanded on the parish councils reasons for support;

- It was previously withdrawn at the advice of the planning officer as the flood risk assessment wasn't done correctly. This has been rectified with this application.
- The comment that there are no bathroom facilities appears to be reason that the hut will not become permanent. A porta-loo is already on site so immediate requirements are met.
- The nature of the enterprise makes it is obvious that onsite overnight accommodation is needed at certain times of the year. Providing audited accounts is not possible as the business cannot be proven until the applicant lives on site. The application is only for temporary permission so that the business need can be proved in the future.
- Local businesses need to be proactively encouraged by the Parish Council and its success will improve the economic base of the village.

9. **Consider the Parish Council response to the public consultation on the Sedgemoor District Council Draft Taxi Licensing Policy**

Councillors declined to pass comment on this item.

10. **Financial Matters.**

a) **For report:**

i) Payments approved since the last meeting

Green Energy (June 2020) £9.20

Approved 31.7.20

C Morrison-Jones	£420.30	salary - July 2020
C Morrison-Jones	£111.27	expenses & reimbursements
Green Energy	£?	(July 2020) invoice not yet received
Mrs K Smith	£30	internal auditor

ii) Amounts received

None

b) To consider the following changes to the Parish Council's banking arrangements:**i) the acquisition of a parish council debit card for minor purchases****ii) facilitating on-line banking and electronic payments**

The clerk explained that recent restrictions (social distancing, cancellation of physical meetings etc) arising from corona virus have highlighted difficulties in council payments that rely on cheques. The clerk has had to use a personal credit card for several transactions (and later reimbursed by the PC). This is not the correct way of working and as the Parish Councils RFO, the clerk proposed to councillors that a debit card (drawing from the PC bank account) is requested and that the PC progresses towards online banking and electronic payments.

If councillors were to agree to the above in principle, then changes would need to be made to the Council's Financial Regulations to allow for this; these could be approved at the September meeting, together with the required paperwork required to make the formal requests to NatWest.

Councillors agreed with the suggestions in principle and asked that the clerk made the necessary investigations to present more detailed information at the September meeting, with particular attention to be paid to the specific points below,

- A debit card with a cap on spending
- Propose a structure for usage of electronic banking (2 approvals for payments, transfers etc).
- Establishing a second Parish Council bank account (reserve account) to ensure that only a working amount of capital is left in current account to minimise exposure to electronic fraud.

c) For report: publication of the notice of public rights in regard the 2019/20 financial year

The clerk reported that the documents required to be placed on the PC website are now in situ and the dates for the notification of public rights have been published (Monday 20th July - Friday 28th August 2020) and displayed on the website and noticeboards.

11. Date and time of the next meeting: Monday 7th September, commencing at 7pm via the Zoom virtual platform

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.19