

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council,
on 29 September 2021, held at the Village Hall**

Time: 20.00 – 22.00

Attendance

Parish Councillors:	Greg O’Broin (GO) Chair Victoria Shepherd (VS) Vice Chair Daniela Danaila (DD)
Parish Clerk/RFO:	Gill Brook (GB)
District/County Councillor:	Richard Webber
Member of the public:	Lyn Cook, Katie (KF) & William Finch (WF), Sian Haynes (SH), Graham Klyne, Ani Mavrioz, Margaret Ridings (MR)

The meeting was quorate

The minutes were taken by Gill Brook

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Claire & Jim Boyce, Sarah Vickers, Chris Hancock

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST

GO and WF are Village Hall Trustees

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

GO welcomed the public and invited them to contribute to any agenda items. MR asked about: Chris Church and guidance on environmental issues. GO replied that he had done some preparatory emailing.

4. Given that he no longer lives in the parish, to formally remove Andy Guinn from the list of councillors – Agreed.

5. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2021 (previously circulated) – approved

6. REPORT FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR, CLLR RICHARD WEBBER, (RW)

RW had asked the highway officers 4 questions:

- a. What is the timing? The planning application is expected early October but it won’t be made public for 6-8 weeks while it goes through legal hurdles.
- b. What plans are there for further consultation with parish councils? OCC will continue to engage with parish councils even though the planning application will have gone in.
- c. Are there any more details on the cost of moving the road? There are no further plans to give any more information on the existing ball park figures.
- d. Is there any more information on traffic modelling? Full transport modelling will be available later.

RW said he had put his political head on the block, is out to win for Appleford, does not need to receive further emails about the issue and his health is starting to suffer over this.

Questions

VS: OCC had booked the village hall for a consultation last week but cancelled it. OCC has pushed back the process as it is taking longer than anticipated. What impact will this have on delivery times?

RW: he understands that OCC is under time pressure. This cancellation is the type of information that can be used in the future as evidence of how this community has been messed around by this process.

WF: Is the costing meaningful?

RW: It needs to be substantiated. We need to get our own set of figures to demonstrate any extra cost of moving the road.

GO: Can you share your emails/meeting notes of actions taken to help us understand what you have been doing?

RW: As it's now political, there are lots of detailed but private discussions. When a step has been taken, I'll get permission and let you know.

GO: Can you comment on the funding question below [point 8b below] and working with Sutton Courtenay and Culham?

RW: There is a £15,000 councillor priority fund for the 6 parish councils for anything deemed worthy of support. Appleford should get more than a pro capita contribution and I'm hoping to be able to give £3,000.

GO: That would be very welcome.

RW: It's important to keep a wall between the planning and political sides.

GB: Where does the money normally go?

RW: e.g. signage around a railway bridge, speeding limits, DAMASCUS youth project.

GO: reiterated that: Appleford needs data, a petition was presented on 14.9.21, the village wants a compromise, there are always technical reasons why the road can't be moved but there is a space of 1.5 miles between Appleford and Sutton Courtenay, with the road 30 foot in the air and so close to the village. Why can't the rest of space be used?

RW: With respect, I know this and am totally persuaded. It's appropriate for a planning committee, not here.

GO: We have now received a letter from OCC Cllr Duncan Enright. We have requested to speak and make our case. The highways people are dumping on us.

RW: I accept what you're saying. It's now up to me. If we are not getting anywhere in 2 weeks, I will come back to Appleford. Appleford has done a fantastic job and councillors are very aware of the situation. Given the development in the area, other councillors will be grateful it is not on their patch, knowing that without the infrastructure planning in place, it will be a county-wide developmental free-for-all

GO passed a copy of the letter received from Owen Jenkins, Director of Growth & Economy, OCC, to RW. The response is from him and Cllr Duncan Enright.

SH pushed RW to commit to an action plan to support Appleford. Please provide us with evidence of what you will do, by when, and report back to us.

RW: I need to go through Duncan Enright first and need two weeks, so by 13 October. If that doesn't work, we need to go for a media approach.

GO: Now it's on its way to planning, what's your advice for Appleford?

RW: We can do anything while the statutory legal process is taking place, but we can't stop it going to the planning committee, which will be a massive meeting. It may be sent back to adjust the alignment, but OCC highways have invested a lot so far.

GO: Is there a role for the Vale?

RW: It's a statutory consultee.

GO added as is Appleford Parish Council.

RW: Its approach will be around environmental health. This could be where the £3,000 is spent, getting our own expertise on these matters. If the Vale objects, this must be considered at that planning committee.

VS: We've received a request from Rita Atkinson to (re) join the NAG5 (Neighbourhood Action Group) with Sutton Courtenay and Drayton and provide £160 financial support to look at speed and traffic modelling. The message was received too late to be correctly considered at this meeting but we are very happy to put it on the next agenda for full discussion. In the meantime, if there is a villager with a particular interest, please let us know.

KF: When the planning application goes in and we get the supporting data, do we have a right to question and interrogate that?

RW: Yes, it has to be there in the planning application, which will be a massive dossier with a 16-week consultation period.

KF: Will they also give evidence of the suggested alternative route?

RW: There will be something in writing.

VS: Is there any Hanson representation expected for upcoming liaison meetings?

RW: Yes.

RW: There is only a small chance that the proposal will go through unaltered at the planning committee stage, but neither he nor OCC has been involved in a such a large project.

VS: What are the other pain points on the road project?

RW: Appleford's is the main one. Abingdon is likely to be the next biggest challenger, not least given ongoing traffic disruption and expected increases in traffic flow relating to the proposed new road.

RW promised to get back to Appleford, wished us luck and commented that there was still a long way to go.

RW left the meeting at 20.55.

7. FINANCE

(a) The following invoices have been paid since the last meeting and were noted:

		Hobs		
		Reprographic.		
		Reimb M	Road petition flyers. Approved	
2019	19/05/2021	Hancock	22.6.21, 6(b)	16.80
			Internal audit 2020-2021. Approved	
2020	10/05/2021	Alan Lambourne	22.6.21, 6(b)	23.40
		Jim Boyland	May grass, litter, Knapp &	
2021	31/05/2021	Trading	Chambrai. Approved 22.6.21, 6(b)	739.20

2022	31/05/2021	Wicksteed Leisure	Playground repairs. Approved 15.3.21, 9	4,094.83
2023	N/A	Gill Brook	June salary	258.50
2024	N/A	Lloyds	quarterly bank charge	18.00
2025	30/06/2021	Jim Boyland Trading	June grass, litter, Knapp & Chambrai	739.20
2026	12/07/2021	Glasdon	Bench concrete & fittings	47.42
2026A	05/07/2021	Glasdon credit note	Bench concrete & fittings Hardwood play chippings.	- 47.42
2027	08/07/2021	PPC Aggregates	Approved 22.6.21, 6(b)	757.94
2028	N/A	Gill Brook	July salary	305.50
2029	N/A	Gill Brook	August salary	305.50
2030	31/07/2021	Jim Boyland Trading	July grass, litter, Knapp & Chambrai	1,138.80
2031	31/08/2021	Jim Boyland Trading	August grass, litter, Knapp & Chambrai	727.20
2032	25/08/2021	Pet Waste Solutions	Dog waste collections: 2.7; 13.7; 27.7; 10.8; 25.8.21	165.60

Committed expenditure:

	Playdale	Zip wire and bump stop. Approved £1,185, 22.6.21, 7(a)	1,185.00
	Various tree surgeons	Tree management. Approved up to £2,000, 22.6.21, 7(k)	1,530.00

GB introduced the above items. All were contractual or already approved at previous meetings. For the items of committed expenditure, VS confirmed that Playdale were scheduled to come to the Rec tomorrow [30.9.21] to do the work, and the tree surgery had been done and that invoice had now been paid.

GO: There was £17,000 in the bank when we started and there is the £17,000 precept, but there has been lots to do. GB has done a great job with the predictions and admin and we should have £10,000 in the bank at the end of financial year. We are very wary of wasting money, but there is no point having it unless it is spent. Clare Cousineau successfully applied for a number of Covid grants for the village hall which now has a very healthy cash balance. The Village Hall has been refurbished, and cleaned out as part of the handover to the new managers – Jim and Claire Boyce. The defibrillators have been sorted. The bark is spread under the zip wire, the playground has been upgraded and is now safe. There is an ongoing tree maintenance programme. The grass cutting is £6,000 p.a. Hanson has donated 80 tonnes of gravel for the recreation ground car park and for the church car park. We need additional councillors to take up a role. In the future we need to look at the status of the village hall as a charity. The village hall is a lovely asset but now needs updating to improve the renting out possibilities with e.g. Wifi and a screen indoors and some kind of additional outdoors facility/awning to open it up and increase the capacity, whatever the weather.

- (b) To note the budget report as at 31st August 2021. GB presented this report which showed that, despite spending on some large but essential repair/maintenance items, the accounts are still in good shape, with a predicted £12,134 in the bank at the end of the financial year – noted.

- (c) To consider requests for grants received from:
- (i) South & Vale Citizens Advice Bureau: recently supported six Appleford residents. It was agreed that this is a worthy cause and benefits Appleford citizens: £50 donation approved.
 - (ii) Clean Slate: it was decided to defer this request for funding pending receiving extra information about the charity and benefit to inhabitants.
 - (iii) NAG5 (see point 6 above) – it was decided to defer this item for proper consideration at the next meeting.
- (d) To agree to claim back £3,986.33 loan made to the Village Hall in December 2016, January 2017 and March 2017 – agreed. The outgoing village hall coordinator Clare Cousineau was thanked for her efforts in obtaining Covid grants.
- (e) To agree to pay the village hall £200 from the income of £700 from St Edmund's Football Club and to discuss further income-generating opportunities and their management – agreed. GO is also talking to Didcot Youth Town at renting at £35 per match. This area is another possibility for a new councillor to take on.
- (f) To agree funding re 8(b) below. Proposal: up to £5,000 (£2,500 in 21/22 and £2,500 in 22/23).

GO presented this item. Appleford's focus is on getting the planning amended to push the proposed road further from the village, and mitigate wider village impacts. This proposal is to provide £5,000 to pay for experts, possibly with Sutton Courtenay, Culham, Clifton Hampden and Abingdon, along with the possible £3,000 via RW and to also ask villagers to make contributions.

This proposal was agreed in principle, that it should be added to the budget as 'committed' and that drawings under this commitment must come back to the council for specific approval/payment.

VS: Sutton Courtenay and Culham have also got this item on their agendas. It's a matter for discussion as we may have different priorities. As an example of fund-raising, VS referred to labour candidate Stuart Jarvis who previously brought our attention to a successful funding campaign to challenge a particular development in Marcham.

8. ROAD PROPOSAL

- (a) Update on meetings held since last APC meeting on 22nd June 2021 – see above
- (b) To discuss a funding contribution to appoint professional advisors re HIF1 Development – see above

9. REVIEW STANDING ORDERS AND CODE OF CONDUCT - postponed.

10. DOG WASTE BIN EMPTYING CONTRACT UPDATE

GB explained that the old contract through Scoop Dotty Dog (SDD) had not been working and that contact with the owner had failed. GO found a new provider and had set up a new contract with Pet Waste Solutions. Service had been sporadic but better than SDD. There has been no collection since 25.8.21. East Hagbourne were also let down by SDD and also engaged Pet Waste, who recently withdrew from their contract.

GO explained that he had spent considerable time researching the market and there is a shortage of dog waste collectors in the region. He contacted VWHDC who advised they are not renewing existing contracts for Parish Councils (bins on private ground) so will not take on Appleford. Pet Waste says the driver shortage has been a problem and they have not been able to establish a regular collection cycle. GO said the fuel crisis is a new and further inhibiting factor.

KF: can we ask dog owners to take the waste home?

GO: this would help.

There was a discussion whether removal of the dog waste bins would force dog owners to take the waste home. LC felt that dog owners might leave the bags on the ground making the situation worse. ACTION GB to draft a notice for the bins and WF to laminate and place them on the 5 bins. It was agreed to employ Poo Patrol who said they would do a one-off collection for a fixed price (£40 per bin x 5 bins) although they won't take on Appleford as a customer because of the distance from their collection area and base at St. Albans. [post meeting note, Pet Waste emptied the bins on 1.10.21]

11. MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF REC AND PLAY AREA

VS reported that this is ongoing and again asked for villagers to come forward to support with Recreation Ground management - trees and football match hire. Thanks to Sarah Vickers for ongoing support with the playground upgrade work.

12. RAILWAY BRIDGE CROSSING SAFETY/IMPROVED CYCLING PROVISION/FOOTPATHS

VS: These items are on our longer to-do list. If there is someone with a passion who could spare some time to help, it would be appreciated.

13. THE APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL COUNCILLORS TO:

(a) liaise with Hanson/FCC/RWE

(b) liaise with Didcot and with Abingdon on their town plans

(c) liaise with Environment Agency on river water quality

Nobody came forward. We still need additional councillors to be able to function correctly.

VS: for information, a note was received today [29.9.21] from RWE that they have submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Request to the Vale of White Horse DC in relation to the data centre related development proposals currently being considered on the Didcot A site.

14. SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

GO: Time is being spent putting content on to the Facebook page but it would be good if there were someone to help with this, in particular local teenagers. GO has not heard further on the application for assistance to OCC for broadband in the village hall.

VS noted the opportunity for Appleford youth to engage with the DAMASCUS youth project.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Basketball court. Nobody has been able to get in touch with George Bowler to get the deposit back, despite numerous attempts over several months. Further discussion to be deferred to the next meeting.

GO said the only way might be to drive over to Aylesbury (where he now lives) and see if he will finish the job with payment only on completion. It was noted his company has been struck off.

ACTION: GB to write and ask for return of the deposit.

16. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON NEXT AGENDA

- (a) Basketball court.
- (b) Progress on legal standing of village hall
- (c) NAG5 request
- (d) Wicksteed rocking horse, and Playdale zip wire - recommend annual playground maintenance review following annual inspection (December)
- (e) Clean Slate request for donation

17. TO AGREE THE DATE FOR THE NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 1st December 2021.

GO thanked everyone for coming.

Meeting closed at 22.00

GB/11.10.21
Approved 1.12.21