

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 17th June 2024 in Charvil Village Hall at 8pm

- Present** Rob Jones, Pat Sutcliffe, Jane Hartley, Matt Walker, Stephen Lucas, and Lee Cripps. Borough Councillor Sam Akhtar was also in attendance as were the assistant clerk and media assistant
- Apologies for Absence** Isabelle Bray and Richard Bennett
- Absent** Narinder Ryatt and Katrin Harding
- 24/8346 Open Forum**
No resident attended but there was one member of the press present.
- 24/8347 Declarations of Interest**
Councillor Hartley declared an interest in the item on the fete as she is part of the Fete Committee.
- 24/8348 To approve the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council, and the Full Council Meeting of 13th May 2024**
These were approved and signed.
- 24/8349 To note the Clerk's report**
This was noted.
It was agreed to bring forward the following agenda item for discussion at this point.
- 24/8350 To consider the offer from the Administration and Media Assistant to run a CPR course for Restart-a-heart Day and to decide a date**
A short presentation was shown to Councillors, and it was explained that there is minimal equipment required, but evidence shows that people are much more likely to attempt to try CPR and use a defibrillator if they have even a little training. The sessions will last an hour, and if they could be a different time of day, then they may appeal to different demographics. It was agreed to accept this offer and a date and time will be confirmed, but it is likely to be mid-October.
- Finance**
- 24/8351 To receive and approve the financial reports**
It was resolved to approve these which was passed unanimously.
- 24/8352 Authorisation of Payments**
It was resolved to recommend approval of the payments of invoices, which was carried unanimously.
£42.50 to A1 Locksmiths
£89.68 to the Assistant Clerk
£180.91 to Aquacare

£1728.45 to Berkshire Pension Fund
 £252 to Blue Moose Graphics
 £156.29 to British Gas
 £324 to Drain and Able
 £118.71 to Everflow
 £82.65 to Grundon
 £3148.60 to HMRC
 £672.77 to JJ Plumbing
 £90 to Loddon Doors
 £260.76 to the clerk
 £44.95 to the Media Assistant
 £479.66 to MKR Electrical Services
 £295.02 to Smartest Energy
 £15.12 to SSE Contracting Ltd
 £1657.46 to Sunshine Commercial Services Ltd
 £1296.36 to Tactical Facilities Management Ltd
 £18.50 to the Village Warden
 £385.02 to Viking
 £48.49 to Yu Energy
 £ 5,041.95 in Payroll

24/8353 To note the application to open a one-year bond with Redwood Bank because Unity Trust would only accept a minimum investment of £85,000
 It was noted that £20,000 has been invested.

24/8354 To consider and approve the quotation for the tree surveys for all Council owned/managed trees
 There was some discussion on this, but it was accepted that the quote was better value than the survey done in 2020, so it was resolved to approve this which was passed unanimously.

24/8355 Planning, Environment and Highways Committee (PEH)
 The Minutes of a meeting on 3rd June were noted. It was agreed that Councillor Lucas should be part of this Committee and will be invited to attend going forward.
 The following Planning Applications were considered:

- 241190 - Householder application for proposed erection of a first-floor side extension at 45 Gingells Farm Road - no Parish Council comment
- 241378 - Householder application for the proposed ground floor front extension along with a first-floor side extension. Conversion of the garage to create habitable accommodation and changes to fenestration at 4, Gingells Farm Road – no Parish Council comment
- 241386 - APPLICATION FOR WORKS TO PROTECTED TREE(S) TPO 1758/2020, T1 Beech – Crown lift to a height of 2.2m over footpath at Homelands, Park Lane - No Parish Council comment

To review the Planning Decision at Riverways Farm Application Number 233455 and consider its implications for Charvil

It was noted that this application was refused against the advice of the planning officers, but that it is likely to go to appeal. The site has not been included in the Draft Local Plan, but the officers seemed pessimistic that an appeal could be defended. Given this, it is unlikely that they will refuse sites that are in the Draft Local Plan within Charvil.

To consider whether to purchase a further Speed Indicator Machine

There was some discussion around whether this should be purchased at this time, but it was pointed out that speeding was the top concern of residents in the

Neighbourhood Plan survey. It was resolved to purchase a second one which was passed by a majority of 4 to 2.

24/8356 Amenities Committee

The Minutes of a meeting on 10th June were noted

To consider the proposal to clear the area behind the small playground at East Park Farm and raising the canopies in the area behind the pavilion

Before the meeting, Councillors had been shown the relevant areas, and it had been explained that this area was rather wasted space currently and could be of much greater Community value if some scrub were removed, and canopies lifted. It was agreed that this was a good idea, and that the assistant clerk should gather some quotations to bring back to a future Full Council meeting.

To review the car park opening and how the checking process is working out

Councillor Jones had created the checklist for the car park and had met with the Village Warden and the Litter Picker who will carry out the weekly checks on the car park. The Councillors had also been shown what to look for when they opened or closed the gates. There has not been any sign of anything untoward since the re-opening of the car park, although there is a damp patch visible quite frequently on part of the carpark near the tennis courts.

To review the opening time for the East Park Farm gates, and how the process is working since the re-opening

The old litter picker, who had been opening every morning, has now left, and very fortunately, the school have agreed that they will open the gates on schooldays.

There was a lot of discussion about what to do in the holidays, particularly over the summer, as so many people are away. Various things were suggested, but it was agreed that everyone should ask around amongst people they know and try to get some trusted people to help in the mornings. Councillor Sutlieff volunteered to put together a spreadsheet of when people were away to see what the coverage is like. It was agreed that at the very least, the car park should be closed on weekend evenings.

To hear an update from the Fete Committee, and to consider a request to allow the Berkshire Classic cars to attend

There was no update, but a request regarding whether it would be ok to invite the classic cars to attend. It was agreed it would be acceptable if their display was held on the car park. The village hall car park could be opened for displaced visitors to use.

24/8357 Borough Councillor's Report

Councillor Akhtar reported that he had been dealing with residents' concerns regarding wheelie bins if there were accessibility issues, or if the users were disabled. He is also working with the Police to try to catch the graffiti artist going by the tag of Berg. He is holding his next litter pick on 30th June and is holding a Wildlife Walk in the Country Park on 6th July. He also mentioned that he and Councillor Smith had voted to refuse the application at Riverways Farm.

Items for Consideration

24/8358 To hear an update on the Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Jones reported that progress over the last month has been slow because the consultant had some very difficult family matters to attend to, but it is hoped there will be more progress soon. The Neighbourhood Grant application had been successful, and funding received.

24/8359 To review the Community Connect event, and to consider how to follow up on the main suggestions and concerns raised. Also, to consider future events for the rest of the year including what to do at the fete.

It was generally agreed that it was good that the Council did something different, but it was disappointing that there were not many more people once stallholders and Councillors were taken into account. However, given that many stallholders were also residents, many of them did find it useful to talk to each other, and to hear what the Council was doing. The stalls with the most positive feedback on the event were those related to the Council or who were of more interest to the older demographic that traditionally attends. It was also agreed that it was a better event than before, but that there are many things to be learnt, including that planning should begin far earlier, and be more thorough. Planning needs to start in January.

As far as the issues that were raised, there were many items that had been raised in the Neighbourhood Plan consultation, including the Twyford to Charvil cycle track and more facilities for teenagers. The cycle track is far bigger than just a Charvil matter, and there needs to be more engagement with the other interested parties to keep pressure on getting this moving. It was agreed that this should be a matter for the Planning, Environment and Highways Committee at this stage.

What to do at the fete was discussed. There is a Parish Council gazebo that can be used, and it was suggested re-using some of the material from the Community Connect event, and hopefully by this point, there will be progress on the Neighbourhood Plan to inform residents of, and perhaps to use a place for public consultation. It may also be an opportunity to raise the profile of the anniversary of A Walk Around Charvil and to gauge support for the cycle route to Twyford Station. The Council will need to think of something to draw people into engaging with the stall as well. More thought will be given to this at the next meeting.

Bill Crane, who wrote A Walk Around Charvil, sent the Council a couple of pages giving some background as to how he came to write it. As it is the 30th anniversary of the original publication, it might be a nice idea to make a digital copy and perhaps update it to cover the last thirty years.

Regarding future events for the year and going forward, the Chair suggested that organising events on a regular basis is a stretch on Parish resources in terms of time and energy, and that it would be preferable to bring more residents on board for this type of thing. He suggested that it may be an idea to see if the Village Society could be resuscitated as it had never formally been wound up. Councillor Hartley, who had been involved, agreed to share details of who was last on the committee with the Chairman, and also said that there was still money in the account, and they had never managed to get the funds released because they could not locate signatories.

Councillor Harding had suggested that it would be an idea to get a food truck at East Park Farm at times over the summer, to try to build a sense of community. Councillor Sutlieff explained that there had been a lot of opposition to this idea in the past, but it was agreed that this idea would be explored and brought back to the next meeting. Whatever the case, this cannot be reliant on staff as they are already working at capacity. The issue of licensing also needed to be researched because the Parish Council only has a limited number of Temporary Events Licenses at its disposal each year.

It was suggested that the re-start-a-heart sessions should be a Parish Council event and promoted as such.

24/8360 To note the update on social media, including what themes can be promoted throughout the summer months

The report was noted. Councillors came up with the following topics for promoting: the Neighbourhood Plan, the food truck if it goes ahead, speed device purchase, re-start-a-heart event, possibly the Village Society, the sunflower competition, Parish Council presence at the fete, A walk around Charvil anniversary update, and possibly planning if Hicks development does go to the Planning Committee in the summer.

24/8361 To note that AFC Reading have been using St. Patrick's Recreation Ground for training on weekday evenings when their agreement is only for games on Saturday and Sunday mornings, and to consider how the Council would like to deal with this

The clerk was asked to remind them that their agreement is for using the pitches on Saturday and Sunday mornings, not during the weekdays.

24/8362 To hear a verbal report on the Community Vision meeting, and to consider how to respond to the Community Vision Survey

Councillors Cripps and Harding attended the meeting with the clerk. Councillor Cripps felt that the Vision was not that well received by anyone at this session. He also felt that although they were talking about diversity, the make-up of the groups was largely white and middle-aged. As far as completing the survey was concerned, the Chair will attend the drop-in at Twyford Library and will draft a response.

24/8363 To note the Minutes of the Northern Parishes Meeting

The Minutes were noted. The Chairman, our representative, could not attend as this clashed with the Community Connect event, but from the Minutes, it was clear that a major topic was Neighbourhood Plans.

24/8364 To note any agenda items for the next meeting

Items suggested included the Fete and what the Council intend to do there, the possibility of a food truck, the playground refurbishment, the Village Society and how to engage with the youth of Charvil.

By virtue of the confidential nature of the business to be contracted the press and public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting under Section 2 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

24/8365 Staffing Issues

To note issues around communication and how this adversely affects the efficiency of the Council, and how to improve this

The clerk was asked to provide examples of poor communication, which she did. It is particularly difficult for staff when they ask a direct question but get no replies. It was suggested that mobile phones are part of the problem, as is the indiscriminate use of "reply all", so that threads can be lost very easily. It was recommended that Councillors put aside some time each day or couple of days to concentrate on the parish council communications.

To re-iterate the importance of Councillors informing everyone when they are on Annual Leave. This does not include odd days unless it impacts on Council meetings

This was noted.

To ensure that if a Councillor is asking a member of staff to do something not on their normal remit, to ask the clerk, as line manager, if this is acceptable

This was noted.

To note the clerk will be on Jury service from 28th July for two weeks

This was noted.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.04pm

Chairman's Signature