

WELLOW ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – MINUTES

Meeting held via Zoom

Wednesday 21st April 2021 at 7.00pm

Present: Cllr Gaye Chesterton-Kay (Chair), Cllr Chris Craig, Cllr Ed Chesterton-Kay, Cllrs Mike and Sue Jones, Cllr Rich Millard, Cllr Charles Payne, Cllr Phil Stehr

Attending: Cllr Nick Adams-King, Cllr Roy Perry, Sharon Whitehouse (Clerk) – Minutes

Apologies: Cllr Richard Light, Cllr Mike Simpson, Cllr Gordon Bailey

This meeting was held remotely via Zoom due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing regulations in place at the time. Parishioners were invited to submit any questions to the Parish Council in advance of the meeting to the Clerk via email and four questions were received prior to the deadline.

001 APOLOGIES

As above.

002 DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Cllr Roy Perry confirmed that after 16 years as our County Councillor he will be standing down this year at the May elections. Children's Services and Adult Social Care take up the largest proportion of the County's budget, approximately £2 billion combined, which puts pressure on other services, including Highways. Cllr Perry commented that his inbox was predominantly filled with complaints about roads and potholes, but with over 5,000 miles of roads to maintain he felt Hampshire did a reasonable job in keeping our roads in working order. He went on to advise that several roads in East Wellow would be re-surfaced soon so residents should look out for local road closures as a result. Before closing, Cllr Perry made attendees aware of the Government's possible future proposals for devolution and the chance that this could lead to Hampshire being split, creating two unitary authorities. He feels that this will not lead to efficiencies as per the case for devolution and encouraged the whole community to express their views when the time comes. Cllr Perry signed off by confirming that although he is bowing out of local politics, he is not giving up community duties completely, as he has agreed to become a Church Warden at Wellow.

Cllr Adams-King opened by saying that it has been a challenging year for everyone, and he wished to share a few key statistics to demonstrate what Test Valley Borough Council has achieved in trying to support the community during the past 13 months.

- £440,000 has been paid to households requiring support with council tax
- Unlike many other councils, bin collections were maintained throughout and around 2.7 million bins were emptied by TVBC
- Parking charges in TVBC car parks were suspended for almost half the year
- Over 80,000 calls were received by the community helpline
- 440 households were helped with housing issues
- 1,966 registered as volunteers
- Cllr Adams-King praised Wellow for its community support volunteers and in particular thanked Cllr Chris Craig for his quick action in establishing the group following the initial lockdown in March 2020

003 Minutes of the Meeting 24th April 2019

RESOLVED: It was resolved by all Members present that the Minutes of 24th April 2019 be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

004 WELLOW PARISH COUNCIL

004a The Chair of the Parish Council, Cllr Gaye Chesterton-Kay presented a summary of the written report which was made available on the Parish Council's website a couple of days before the Parish Meeting.

Regarding the Neighbourhood Plan, regrettably restrictions placed upon everybody in the last year has led to a delay in progress. Unfortunately, the community event planned for March 2020 had to be postponed due to Coronavirus and instead the team has concentrated on tasks that can be done on a desktop basis, progressing with formulating policies and gathering evidence.

The Chair expressed her sincere thanks, on behalf of the Parish Council and residents, to Mike and Thelma Freeman who have recently taken the decision to step back from the Neighbourhood Plan, after giving so much time and effort to the project.

Whilst there are several residents on the Steering Group it has been difficult to undertake much of the work with restrictions in place. Now that Coronavirus restrictions are hopefully being eased, the Neighbourhood Plan team can continue where it left off. It is preparing for community consultation on the work undertaken so far and the Chair of the Parish Council summarised key achievements to date and outlined the anticipated timetable for community consultation.

004b Cllr Charles Payne gave an update on Wellow Common, highlighting some of the extraordinary issues the Parish Council has had to deal with in the last year, arising out of the pandemic such as verge parking, excessive littering and illegal fires and camping.

004c Cllr Sue Jones presented the report on footpaths in the Parish and emphasised how fortunate we are in Wellow to have such a network of rural paths to enjoy. Cllr Jones referred to the ongoing closure of Footpath 22 Foxes Lane to Scallows Lane, awaiting boardwalk improvements being undertaken by Hampshire County Council and advised that the Parish Council has recently received confirmation that work is due to start w/c 26th April 2021.

004d Cllr Rich Millard gave an update on improvements made by the Tennis Club at Hatches Farm Sports Ground including installation of the floodlights and re-surfacing of the tennis courts, courtesy of funding received from the Lawn Tennis Association and the Parish Council. A flourishing coaching programme has been established and the Tennis Club now has a sustainable future with around 100 members currently; 12 teams are registered with leagues at junior, adult and veteran levels. There has also been a breakthrough in engagement with Wellow School.

Cllr Millard thanked the Parish Council on behalf of the Tennis Club, for their support in helping to achieve the improvements at Hatches Farm Sports Ground. He referred to the benefits of sport for both physical and mental well-being and acknowledged the Parish Council for recognising the value of sport in the community.

004e The Clerk presented a summary of Parish Accounts for 2020/2021, as included in the Annual Report, available on the website and attached as Appendices 1 & 2. These are provisional figures, to be finally audited in May. The accounts will be available for public inspection from 1st July 2021 and the Notice of Public Rights will be published on notice boards and the website in accordance with statutory requirements.

005 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. When will Footpath 22 be re-opened?

A. As advised by Cllr Sue Jones in her verbal update the work to the boardwalk being undertaken by HCC is due to commence w/c 26th April 2021 and the footpath should be re-opened shortly after.

Q. What measures will the Parish Council be taking to ensure that the Blackwater Equestrian development follows the submitted plans and conditions and, also in light of any deviation from the plans and conditions, what role will the Parish Council be taking to ensure that the best interests of villagers are taken into account by both the planning authority and the developer?

A. Cllr Mike Jones (Chair of Planning) advised that the Parish Council's only statutory involvement with planning applications is as a consultee when its views are sought at the application stage. Beyond that, any resident concerns about enforcement issues should be taken up direct with the relevant planning authority, in this case Test Valley Borough Council officers.

Q. There were 2 general enquiries concerning progress on the Neighbourhood Plan, with one specifically asking when Wellow residents will be consulted about the draft NHP.

A. The Chair felt that she had addressed both queries in her verbal update, but in the interests of transparency an extract from her verbal report is shown below.

A Parish-wide Character Appraisal and Design Guide (including landscape) has been undertaken and the Draft document is on the website for public consultation. The final document will be published on the website at the beginning of May.

A Housing Needs Assessment of open market and affordable housing need has been undertaken and shared with the Steering Group. This final document will be published on the website w/c 26th April 2021, along with the outcome of a Business and Employment Survey and Study.

An Ecological/Biodiversity review of the entire parish has taken place and the work to date shared with the Steering Group on a parish mapping platform. This information will be published on the website at the beginning of May, along with an Assessment of Parish Local Green Spaces and Parish Important Views.

A review of potential housing sites has taken place based on sites submitted to TVBC and the need for affordable housing sites, and technical consultants AECOM were employed to assess each site's potential. At present a copy of all sites under consideration has been sent to the New Forest National Park Authority and Test Valley Borough Council and we are awaiting a response to see if they believe there is anything immediately that will preclude any of the sites from being put forward. Once we have the Local Planning Authority responses, we can then consult the Parish on the various options.

The intention is for informal public consultation on our documents outlined above as soon as possible. At this stage we are not sure what form this will take as, although we would like a face-to-face event, it may not be possible depending on the Covid circumstances.

We are aiming to produce our Pre-Submission Consultation Draft Neighbourhood Plan this Summer/early Autumn, which will give everyone the opportunity to have a detailed say on the Plan and its associated documents. This will be a six-week consultation period for all residents and stakeholders with an interest in the Parish.

The Chair advised that Parishioners were welcome to ask any further questions by email. Enquiries to be sent into the Clerk at the Parish Office.

The Meeting Closed at 8.50pm

Public participation at this meeting: approximately 15 Parishioners attended