

WESTFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held remotely on Zoom on
Monday 1st February 2021 commencing at 7.00pm

Present: Chair: Cllr G Fuller;

Cllrs D Cooper, J Honess, R Hopkins, E Jackson, L Mansell,
R Moss, B Wallbridge, P Williams and P Wilkinson

Absent: Cllr V Cox

Attending: Lesley Close, Clerk and Tracey Stephens, Admin Assistant; Sarah Warren, B&NES Cabinet member for Climate Emergency and Neighbourhood Services; Lisa Wareham, Census Engagement Manager, North Somerset Bath and North East Somerset; 1 member of the public

A member of the public expressed their concern about the future of land at Waterside Valley which is for sale. This was backed up by an email, circulated to Councillors from another resident outlining the diverse ecology and wildlife on this land and what it means to local people in terms of recreation.

Lisa Wareham spoke to Council about the need to engage residents with the 2021 Census, which is taking place in March. She said that normally she would be visiting communities to encourage people to take part, but that as she was unable to this year she was relying on Parish and Town Councils to help with the engagement. The census can be done electronically or paper copies will be sent out to households.

112. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Chair brought this item to the top of the agenda. Sarah Warren had been invited to the meeting to advise how Westfield Parish Council could begin to work on combating climate change. She outlined the work that she had been doing with B&NES and other parishes/towns in the area. While the work was going on within B&NES, Sarah said that it was important that parishes and towns were coming on board as they are closer to the people and could engage with them. The restrictions on movement due to covid meant that she was unable to visit Westfield, but she assured Councillors that she would do so once restrictions were lifted. She outlined what is being done in B&NES and the parishes and pointed Council towards organisations that could help with funding or ideas.

Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting.

Signed Dated

Westfield Parish Council

113. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

114. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Cllrs Hopkins and Moss declared an interest in item 7 Waterside Valley as they are on the board of the Big Local. Cllr Honess declared an interest in the same item in that he had put an offer in for the land in a personal capacity before deciding not to go ahead with the purchase.

115. MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – 4th January 2021

Resolved: The minutes of 4th January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

116. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) Environment and Development Committee – 11th January 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the Environment and Development Committee meeting held on 11th January be noted.

(b) Finance and Personnel Committee – 20th January 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on 20th January be noted.

(c) Climate Change Emergency Working Group – next meeting 2nd February

117. APPROVAL OF ANY ITEMS OF £5,000 AND CONSIDERATION OF ANY VIREMENT

There were no items over £5,000 for consideration.

118. WATERSIDE VALLEY

Cllrs Hopkins and Moss left the meeting for this item only.

Discussion was held around the land for sale at the Waterside Valley, and whether Westfield Parish Council should purchase it as it was felt to be an asset in the community for biodiversity, an antidote to the toxins of the A367, an environment for learning about nature, sledging in winter, animal grazing, a place to combat issues of mental health and an outside space to walk especially for the increasing number of people working from home.

Funding was discussed and it was hoped that it could be sourced from s106 and the Big Local.

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The Financial Regulations state:

Financial Regulation 14.4 states that ..No real property (interests in land) shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the full council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed conditions of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate).

Financial regulation 17.2 says that when considering a new activity the Clerk with the RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the council.

Cllr Jackson proposed putting in an offer for the land of £90,000, subject to the above regulations, Cllr Wilkinson seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Resolved: to put in an offer for the land at Waterside Valley of £90,000, subject to the conditions outlined in the Financial Regulations.

The Environment and Development Committee would agree the details of the project and the Clerk would put in an application for s.106 funding for 50% of the cost and contact would be made with the Big Local for the other 50%. Going forward, day to day maintenance of the land would be met by the Parish Council through the precept and any income from allowing grazing on the land.

Cllrs Hopkins and Moss rejoined the meeting

119. JUBILEE GREEN

Cllr Hopkins gave an update on the meeting with B&NES and Curo regarding the possibility of the land at Jubilee Green being transferred to Westfield Parish Council.

It was felt that this area is the centre of the Westfield community and should be maintained as such.

Resolved: to respond to B&NES **(1)** to advise that Westfield Parish Council is minded to take over the land subject to Financial Regulations, Risk Assessments and Public Consultation. **(2)** The transfer must be done with no cost to Westfield Parish Council, with B&NES meeting the necessary legal fees.

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120. BUDGET 2021/22 AS RECOMMENDED BY THE F&P COMMITTEE

Council offered a vote of thanks to the Finance Officer for her work on a very comprehensive budget.

Resolved: To agree the Budget 2021/22 as recommended by the F&P Committee

121. PRECEPT 2021/22 AS RECOMMENDED BY THE F&P COMMITTEE

Resolved: To agree the Precept 2021/22 as recommended by the F&P Committee in the amount of £207,650.

122. PRECEPT LEAFLET 2021/22 AS RECOMMENDED BY THE F&P COMMITTEE

It was felt that residents ought to be advised that the precept was being increased by 2p per week at Band D level.

Resolved: To agree the precept leaflet 2021/22 as recommended by the F&P Committee with the inclusion of the notice that the precept is being increased by 2p per week at Band D level.

123. RISK MANAGEMENT 2021 AS RECOMMENDED BY THE F&P COMMITTEE

Resolved: To agree the Risk Management Strategy, Financial Risk Assessment, Annual Review of the Insurance Schedule and Local Council Risk Survey Summary, as recommended by the F&P Committee

124. OUTSIDE BODIES REPORTS

There were no outside bodies reports

125. CREATING COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Cllr Jackson reported that she is still getting compliments about the Christmas lights in Westfield. Thanks were offered to Cllr Cooper for her part in choosing the lights.

126. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr Fuller thanked the office staff and all Councillors for continuing to provide support during the pandemic.

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127. B&NES COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Cllr Jackson reported that clinically vulnerable people will be getting a letter advising of the covid vaccination this week.

Cllr Moss reported that residents had been getting letters regarding the vaccinations and that they were being advised to travel long distances. He said that local GP surgeries had been very quick to advise those affected that it wasn't necessary to travel a distance.

He reported on the B&NES budget – income from tourism and business rates has dropped significantly, but income from parking has increased.

It was agreed to exclude the press and public on the grounds that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

128. TO NOTE THE RESPONSE FROM THE LAND AGENT IN RESPECT OF THE PROPOSED NATURE RESERVE

Thanks were offered to the Clerk for her considerable amount of work on the project. Councillors were advised by the land agent that purchasing the land was looking unlikely.

Resolved: not to pursue any further for now.

The meeting closed at 8:41pm

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