



Great Shefford Parish Council

Clerk to The Parish Council: Mrs Kim Lloyd

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GREAT SHEFFORD MINUTES MEETING HELD ON 4th MARCH 2021. THIS WAS A REMOTE MEETING.

Cllr's Present:

Cllr. S. Ackrill (Chair)

Cllr. B. Williams

Cllr. S. McCarthy

Cllr. R. Hale-Power

Cllr. L. Freeman

Cllr. E. Tweedie

Parish Clerk: K. Lloyd

Attendance: Laura Farris MP

Richard Hancock from the Environment Agency (EA)

4 Members of the Public.

The Clerk announced this meeting will be recorded for minute purposes and the recording will be deleted once the minutes are approved.

1 APOLOGIES

No apologies received.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest raised.

3 WELCOME LAURA FARRIS MP

Cllr. Ackrill introduced Laura Farris our MP and thanked Laura for attending the meeting.

Laura thanked the Parish Council for welcoming her to the meeting and said she looks forward to the days when everyone can meet in person again, instead of looking at each other through a box on the screen. Laura said, she had been able to learn a lot about the Parishes when attending Parish Council meetings, as unless someone writes to Laura, she does not know what the issues are in the Parish. Laura said, she was pleased to have made some progress for some Parishes on issues and knew that flooding is a problem in Great Shefford. Laura said, she is happy to pick up on where the previous MP left off and would like to bring this issue to a close for all and is ready to listen and help if she can.

4 Q AND A FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL TO LAURA FARRIS MP

SPEEDING IN THE VILLAGE

Cllr. Ackrill provided a report of the speeding problem in the village.

Data proved that the last SID operation deployed over a period of 11 days showed that over 70% of vehicles are going over the speed limit. This data showed 4,334 were in excess of 35mph and so would have had a ticket if a speed camera was in the village. If a speed camera was in the village it would certainly pay for itself very quickly with all the tickets that would be issued and Great Shefford would have the result of slower traffic! Laura asked if a speed camera is not possible, would a

Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) be worthwhile. Laura then spoke of a village that she had helped to get a VAS. Since, this has been reported to have reduced the speed of traffic in that village.

Cllr. Freeman said, its more educating vehicle drivers to slow down and perhaps a VAS (showing a smiley or sad face) would make people think and slow down for the whole length of the road through the village, instead of just the section where a speed camera would be.

Cllr. Hale-Power asked if the 30mph signs could be larger, rather than the small ones we have.

Cllr. Tweedie said, that motorbikes also speed through the village, and that so much time has been invested in trying to find a solution to reduce the speed and asked how Laura could help with this.

Laura said, it is helpful to have some personal testament. In another Parish Laura had asked the Parish Council /parishioners to email the reasons (i.e., SID data, dates/times of accidents, road layout etc) of why the village needs enforcement to reduce the speed of vehicles. This way of communication proved to be receptive to WBC (West Berkshire Council) when Laura presented this issue to them. Laura asks for all concerned to email the Chairman, Cllr. Steve Ackrill and then it can be sent to Laura in one email.

Laura said, I am here to make your voice heard but I do not have the local knowledge to know what is going on and what the issues are. Please do send your reasons regarding speeding in the village and Laura would talk to WBC and try and get some enforcement for Great Shefford.

FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

Cllr. Ackrill provided a report from when the flooding problem started, up to January this year.

The flooding problem started in February 2014 after numerous properties in villages flooded and were affected. In Great Shefford almost immediately after it was flooded, WBC and EA looked at the problem.

In Great Shefford the issue was found to be from spring water that runs from the north direction of the village, this runs into a ditch down the east side of the A338. It runs to the northside of the village by the council houses and crosses under the road. This floods the area behind the houses, then comes down to the filling station and then floods the houses there and crosses back.

The obvious solution is to keep the water on the east side of the A338.

More than £300,000 worth of testing and modelling, carrying out various studies including bore holes was done. The scheme was then decided for a pipe to keep the water on the east side of the A338 with a ditch on the end, to keep the water on the east side.

The EA then proposed a Flood Alleviation Scheme, and said it was going to cost just over one million pounds. The Parish was then asked to raise £80,000 as the Parishes contribution towards the scheme. Supporters of Great Shefford then formed the Flood Alleviation Association and gained charity status and through various fundraising methods managed to achieve the required target.

In early 2017 the EA proposed a pipe of 1.6-metre which was then affordable, but since has gone back to a 1.35-metre pipe to save money. Cllr. Ackrill did not think the size of the pipe was an issue as it is still large enough to stop the problem.

The EA then informed Great Shefford Flood Alleviation Association that there is a £500,000 shortfall of funding.

In April 2019, Cllr. Ackrill spoke to Richard Benyon our previous MP numerous times. Richard called a meeting with WBC and the EA. Cllr. Ackrill present in that meeting said that he thought the high figures for the project were ridiculous. It was then at this time, an EA senior member of staff asked Cllr. Ackrill, if this could be a community led project for less cost, then would the community like to

project manage the scheme. It was also said at this time the EA could pass the funding to Great Shefford. Cllr. Ackrill agreed to this in principle.

Laura asked what funding is still on offer from the EA?

Cllr. Ackrill said, around £700,000 is still available in funding. The fund of £300,000 has already been spent on various surveys and other works completed so far. The fund of £700,000 is enough funding for a community led scheme but not enough for the EA to do the work as their overheads are higher. The EA are not geared up to do a scheme like ours, and in fact have never encountered a community led scheme before.

A business case was then submitted in Nov/Dec of 2020. This was reported from the EA that it was a strong business case and it sounded positive.

Then in January 2021. Cllr. Ackrill attended a zoom meeting with two EA members. Cllr. Ackrill was then informed the EA cannot hand over the funds for a community led scheme. Cllr. Ackrill had been challenging the EA ever since to find a way around this.

Cllr. Ackrill has given up so much time to this project and said he would be more than happy to hand over the project to the EA, but sadly did not think they would ever be able to do it on the funds they have available.

Richard Hancock from the EA was then invited to speak.

Firstly, Richard thanked Cllr. Ackrill for given the brief which sums it up perfectly and said how deeply sorry he was on behalf of the EA that this has happened. He said it is because this is a community led scheme, which has never been done before. There is no legislation to say they can do this and hand over the funds, but there is also nothing that says it cannot be done. Unfortunately, after the business case was submitted last year this was rejected by the EA Project Assurance Team who are there to check/approve that what the EA are proposing to do is correct.

Richard stressed the EA are working on a way to make this happen, ultimately the community led way is the affordable way to do this project. The business case would normally be the final tick in the box and the EA would have then handed over the project to the community.

Richard admitted this is the failure of the EA organisation and wanted to make the point that this is not Steve Ackrill's failure. The EA cannot do anything until we can get it approved and signed off. Richard stressed that nobody is doing more than what Steve Ackrill is doing to make this happen, more so, than any other person involved in any other scheme he was aware of. The EA are not prepared to do projects on this scale, and this is very frustrating, because this is one of the simpler flood solutions we could ever do.

Laura said, surely the EA have a duty of care, this community has raised a large amount of funds in a short time, there must be a solution to this.

Richard said, this is what his senior leaders are working on to try and find a solution.

Laura then asked if it would help if she spoke to the seniors. Richard then said, the EA have no statutory obligation to provide this scheme but stressed no single person in the EA is working on this project to walk away from it and the EA are trying to work towards making this happen.

Richard said, it does feel like we are not any further closer and did totally understand the community's frustrations. Sadly, the EA are not in the position where they can start the work anytime soon.

Laura asked if it requires for her to talk to the EA seniors and said, it seems like the EA governance is the block here. There are processes in place which are obviously the blocker.

Cllr. Ackrill then said, he had received an email on the day of this meeting, regarding his question of what specific legislation is stopping the EA passing the funds to a community led project. The email from Richard Hancock suggested that there is nothing legally stopping the EA passing the funds, but they are bounded by the HM Treasury rules. Cllr. Ackrill said, as the EA are bound by government rules can Laura help in some way.

Richard said, it has been suggested to deliver the funds with another authority like Thames Water (TW). The EA seniors are working out the mechanism for this, if TW can claim funds from the EA and then pass to the community organisation, this might be an option?

Another option is to go back to the EA contractors and show the quote that Cllr. Ackrill submitted. and ask them to match this quote. We will of course also keep looking for partnership funding/grants.

Laura said, her first point of call is to talk to the EA and Laura did not think this is a government issue. Richard then suggested the EA could give the funding to WBC, but the EA have not considered this route because WBC have a lot of other flood alleviation projects happening at this time.

Laura said, if the EA could pass the money to WBC and then WBC pass to the Great Shefford community led organisation, perhaps this is something Laura could help with. Laura suggested a round table meeting with Cllr. Ackrill, Richard Hancock, the other senior members from the EA who can sign this off and WBC, to discuss what can be done to make this happen!

5 **OPEN FORUM.**

The postmaster who was in attendance asked to raise one point to Richard Hancock (EA). The postmaster said, he must face parishioners every day of the week in his shop and is embarrassed to tell them the latest news regarding the EA. Himself had played a part in the fundraising in encouraging parishioners to donate through conversations and organised events. Good people had donated money and certain individuals had even donated large funds, one in the sum of £10,000. Everyone feels totally let down by the EA.

Richard answered and said, you have done everything that you could do to help this project happen and on behalf of the EA we really are deeply sorry that he and everyone felt like this, but it is the EA that has let you and the parishioners down.

6 **MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS PARISH COUNCIL MEETING.**

Councillors **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** to confirm and adopt the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 4 February 2021.

7 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED**

No planning applications to consider at time of publishing Agenda.

Decision Notice

20/00499/HOUSE - Foremans House, Wickfield Farm, Ermin Street, Shefford Woodlands.

Section 73: Removal of Condition 3 (Garage or storage use only) and 5 (no cooking facilities or equipment) of previously approved application 03/01353/HOUSE (approved on appeal APP/W0340/1/03/1131937) Proposed two storey garage and ancillary accommodation over. WBC granted planning permission.

8 **FENCE AT BOTTOM OF HUNGERFORD HILL UPDATE**

Cllr. Ackrill and Williams spoke to the contractor who will be in the village to repair the fence in the coming weeks. When the fence is erected, the Parish Council's owned Chevron will be also erected. Following the last meeting, Cllr. Ackrill emailed an older picture to the Clerk, showing a Chevron in place along this road, despite WBC saying in recent communication that a Chevron had never been there. Cllr. Ackrill asked the Clerk to forward this picture to WBC to show them that a Chevron used to be there and keep pushing for WBC to provide another.

ACTION: Clerk

9 **ANNUAL PLAYGROUND INSPECTION REPORT**

The Clerk emailed the report to the Councillors. The main concern was the Junior Multi-play. Cllrs. Williams and Hale-Power taped this piece of equipment off after the Clerk received an email from the inspector advising for it to be closed as it was stated unsafe. Then on receiving the full report later this showed a medium risk. Cllr. Ackrill agreed two of the four legs are rotting, but an additional four fixing points are in place which secures it to the ground. Cllr. Ackrill said, the parts to fix it are going to cost around £200 - if we do it ourselves.

The Clerk was asked to obtain a quote in first instance.

An email was received from a resident to consider adding gym equipment in the recreation ground. The Clerk was asked to investigate further costs.

ACTION: Clerk

10 **RECREATION GROUND PARKING SIGNAGE**

The Parish Council thanked Cllr. Ackrill for erecting the 'no parking signs.

Cllr. Ackrill noted a conversation on the Village Community Facebook page stating the Parish Council need to do something about the parking in this area. Cllr. Ackrill wanted to make everyone aware that the Parish Council have no powers to do anything regarding this area of grass at the top of Station Road. It is down to the owner of land. This piece of ground is not owned by the Parish Council, the landowner is the only one that can do anything. It is a public highway until you get to the end of the tarmac, then it is privately owned.

The Councillors hoped the signage will help in the very least.

11 **CLOSURE OF THE YOUTH CLUB/CONTAINER**

The Parish Council received an email asking if Parish Council had anything in the container as it was going to be removed from the village hall car park. The Parish Council had no equipment in the container but believes there is Country Fayre equipment (i.e., Fencing) in the container.

It was noted in the email that someone maybe paid to take the container away.

Cllr. Ackrill said, nobody should be paid to take the empty container away as it still has a value. The Clerk will let them know.

ACTION: Clerk.

12 **FINANCE**

Members **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** to confirm the payments for March as shown in Appendix 1.

The Cashflow 2020/21 for March was noted.

(All finance documents emailed to members of the Parish Council before the meeting)

13 **COUNCILLORS /CLERK REPORTS.**

Cllr. Tweedie reported that the white railings on Station Road that border the river are rusty and in need of some attention. Cllr. Ackrill said, he would look and let the Clerk know if we need to contact WBC.

ACTION: Clerk/Cllr. Ackrill

The Clerk has contacted the internal auditor and booked him for the internal 2020-21 audit.

The Clerk said, she had attended the CiLCA induction session at a cost of £45 which will be split between the Parishes. The first course session starts the end of April. The study time is estimated to be around 4 hours a week and will have 12 months to complete.

The Clerk said, she will chase up WBC regarding the uneven footpath ground. **ACTION: Clerk**

14 **MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION.**

Parish Council Communication.

15 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING.**

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 1 April 2021 at 7.30pm.

This is a remote meeting unless government guidance is granted to meet again. The Clerk will inform the Parish Council members if this changes.

Appendix 1.

Statement of Accounts
Accounts for Payment MARCH 2021

Expenditure brought forward 20-21 £18,699.74

Payments

Cheque No	Payee	Description	Amount
BACS	FCC Recycling	Wheelie Bin Collection	£ 29.81
BACS	FCC Recycling	Wheelie Bin Collection	£ 27.52
BACS	FCC Recycling	Wheelie Bin Collection Duty of Care Admin Cost	£ 64.80
BACS	Start Traffic Ltd	Chevron Sign and Parts	£ 136.38
BACS	Steve Ackrill	Payment for Parking Signage	£ 29.96
BACS	PlayInspection	Annual Inspection	£ 83.40
BACS	Kim Lloyd	NJC Inflation Rate, backdated to 01/04/21	
BACS	Kim Lloyd	Clerk Salary	
BACS	Kim Lloyd	Fence Claim Search	£ 4.50
			£ 1,175.35

Receipts

Total Receipts £ -

Financial Position to date

Balance carried forward 31/03/19 (incl S106 contributions)	£ 22,955.26
Income for year 20-21 to date.	£ 16,807.95
Less payments for year 20-21 to date	£19,875.09
Total including S106 Funding, Funds and Reserves	£ 19,888.12