

## FINMERE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 in Finmere Village Hall

Present:- Councillors, Mike Kerford-Byrnes (MKB) (Chairman), Steve Trice (ST), Mike Kirby (MK), Amanda Hodgkins (AH) and Joanne Brooks (JB)

In attendance:- County Councillor Catherine Fulljames, Sharron Chalcraft (Parish Clerk and RFO) and seven members of the public

1. Apologies:- Apologies were received from Councillors, Katherine Grimston (KG) (Vice Chairman) and Kevin Ochel (KO)

### 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2016 were approved with corrections.

### 3. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

(This was delivered after item 4 below as many villagers present wished to hear that report first)

CF expresses regret that she was not asked to contribute to the discussion of Item 4 below. MKB apologises and explains that he had thought the opening of the floor would apply to all.

CF has emailed MKB and SC with any information that she had been given. CF has also heard from the Fire Brigade. The Station Commander of Kidlington Fire Station explained that a structural engineer had visited the site on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> and declared the building unsafe. There is a significant amount of rubbish still in the building which will need to burn away; this could take a week or more. The decision to let the building burn out had been taken partly due to the considerations for safety of staff and also due to the possibility of ground pollution from water run-off after the use of hoses. The Commander will be visiting the site this week and the Fire Brigade will investigate the cause of the blaze.

CF explains that she herself was called on Sunday morning, as she would be after any major incident in her area. CF did find the EA to be very quiet at the QL meeting. CF asks for any input.

Comment – Mr Lenihan, villager – It is now Fire Brigade policy to allow fires to burn out if there is no danger to life or threat of spread.

Comment – Mrs Wood, villager – Someone should have tested the smoke, either the Environmental Health department of CDC or Public Health England.

Highways issues had been raised with CF by John Cunningham, villager, and CF emailed OCC Highways, receiving a fairly curt reply. CF then drove around the village herself and observed the road closure along Mere Road. The Deputy Director of Highways has contacted her to explain that they have visited the site and the following actions will be taken: minor

patches are to be dealt with in the next financial year, the Highways Officer is to put any major issues in for repair and drainage issues will be addressed. The road closure was due to a pothole.

ST pointed out that the Fix my Street issues had taken a very long time to repair.

Question – John Cunningham, villager – Are we getting value for money?

CF points out also that the recent amendments to conditions for a planning application from Opes, see item 19 below, only passed by one vote.

Comment – Mr Lenihan – On the subject of planning: the newly laid tarmac pavements in Chinalls Close are not really up to standard. Vehicles are already parking on them and now there is to be more building in the area after builder's vehicles damaged the former paving.

Question – Mrs Wood – Why when the pavements were done did the council not resurface the 100 yards of pavement in Valley Road, the only other pavement in the village?

CF explains that such a question would be better to come from the PC. SC is to contact OCC Highways and copy CF in. The issue may well have been cost; the project did run over from a 3 week schedule to 5 weeks.

#### 4. QUARRY LIAISON MEETING REPORT

(This was dealt with after item 2 above as many villagers present wished to hear it)

The report was given by Barbara Cunningham (BC), village representative. A quarry liaison meeting was held on Wednesday March 2<sup>nd</sup>. In attendance were Richard Lucas and Colin Hart of Opes, County Councillor Catherine Fulljames, Bill Stewart-Jones and David Perriam of OCC, Louise Greenwood of the Environment Agency, MKB of the PC and BC for the village. The meeting had been due to be held at the landfill site but due to circumstances was held at The Old School, Newton Purcell.

The meeting dealt solely with the circumstance which had necessitated relocating the meeting, namely the fire which started in the MRF on the morning of Sunday February 28<sup>th</sup>. The fire was spotted by MKB's daughter Helen who was helping with the horses and MKB raised the alarm and guided the first fire engines to the spot. BC expresses the thanks of the village for their prompt actions. Six engines attended the fire. Nobody was present in the MRF and there were no casualties. The western end of the MRF was severely damaged and the roof collapsed. The eastern end has also been damaged, though less severely, and the building has been declared unsafe, meaning that as there is no risk to life the fire will be left to burn itself out, this may take some time.

The fire brigade handed the site over to Opes at mid-morning on Monday. The site must be kept under 24 hour monitoring. The loss adjusters have not attended yet as it is still impossible to say how badly damaged the equipment in the building has been. Commissioning was still under discussion but the machinery will definitely be inoperable now. The fire brigade attended again on Tuesday at 2p.m. when the offices were shaken by a loud report, possibly a pressurised container exploding.

The fire brigade had confirmed that they did not know the contents of the MRF and what was burning. Louise Greenwood confirmed that the EA had visited the site on Wednesday morning and decided that there was no reason to inform Public Health England. The building and equipment cost approximately £4.2 million. The large amount of stockpiled fuel on the apron was fortunately unaffected. It could well take six months to sort things out. The heat sensors in the building were apparently triggered at 3a.m. but no contacts were made with staff.

MKB and BC questioned the meeting about the acrid smelling smoke which has been blowing across the village and the advice was to keep windows and doors shut and visit your GP if you feel unwell. The EA again said there was 'no concern.'

MKB then opened the floor to comments.

Ques – Mrs Wood – Why was the village not told about this earlier? The PC newsletter did not arrive for days.

MKB explained that he had produced the newsletter as quickly as he could and it was then handed out to councillors for distribution as normal. MKB then read out an update he had received from the Fire Brigade. The communiqué reiterated the QL report. The insertion of sprinklers into the building through holes in the doors had been contemplated but was deemed too dangerous. The problem is that the building cannot be made safe until the fire is out but the fire cannot be put out till the building is safe.

Comment – Mrs Wood – It was very poor not to call out Public Health England straight away, especially as the Fire Brigade admits it does not know what is burning.

Comment – John Cunningham – The EA's behaviour has been bordering on the criminally irresponsible.

ST points out that the Fire Brigade are the authority in this matter and if they are happy then it should be safe to assume that all is well. MKB explains that the EA sets and administers rules for sites but the consequences of any problem are dealt with by Environmental Health.

Comment – John Cunningham – No responsibility is being taken, the over tip on the mound made millions of pounds for the company and someone must be responsible.

ST again points out that the Fire Brigade are responsible for determining the risks at the time of the incident and for advice on general public safety.

Comment – Mrs Wood – The Fire Brigade should have told Public Health England straight away.

ST points out that there have been big fires before and there are not always large scale affects on the surrounding population.

Comment – Phillip Rushforth, villager – I phoned the EA on Tuesday. They said then that CDC Environmental Health had been told.

Comment – Mr Lenihan – It seems clear that we cannot rule out arson.

BC and MKB confirm that no possibilities can be ruled out; there is the question of why the heat sensors did not trigger a contact with staff. JB points out that we should be able to tell

what was in the building from records of deliveries. MKB has been contacted by a resident of Stable Close who is very worried about the polluting smoke and what it may contain. This resident had contacted both the EA and OCC and both bodies had referred him to MKB. MKB is to talk with Neil Whitton, Environmental Health officer with CDC and ask him to contact the residents of Stable Close and perhaps give information for the whole village.

Comment – Mrs Wood – Barry (District Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council) will want to talk to him as well I am sure.

ST suggests that going forwards, the PC should determine the process that applies when a large fire occurs, and which authority is responsible for air quality monitoring, and exactly how this is triggered. The outcome of this can be communicated to villagers.

The PC should request monitoring equipment, just because nothing has been done that does not mean everything is fine. MKB is to go to CDC offices and talk to Environmental Health and ascertain whether they have taken any readings and if so what they were. We need to find out the basis of this ‘everything is fine’ message. There will be an update from Opes every other day.

It is the general feeling of the meeting that in the event of an urgent newsletter needing to go out in future it should be placed on the website and delivered by hand around the village by the fastest possible method rather than waiting for any councillors who are unavailable to return and distribute their share.

## 5. CHINALLS CLOSE PAVING SLABS

Following the decision by the PC at the February 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting to remove the slabs and offer them to the residents of Chinalls Close or eventually to the entire village SC and MKB were contacted by residents of Chinalls Close, Mr and Mrs Lenihan; their letter was circulated to all councillors and residents of Chinalls Close. They strongly defended the slabs as being a useful play area and in no way hazardous and were unhappy at the degree of consultation which had taken place, having not themselves been able to express an opinion. They asked that the slabs not be mentioned in the newsletter and offered to the village but that the whole matter should be reconsidered at this meeting.

Phillip Rushforth (PR), resident of Chinalls Close, contacted ST when he received the note. He has been liaising with ST over the amenity area and confirmed that he had received mixed reactions when canvassing opinion on the slabs with a general preference for removal. PR has now changed his mind on the removal and agrees that the slabs could be useful but they will need to be re-laid.

Comment – Mrs Wood – To say that residents could remove the slabs for their own use was reckless as it could have resulted in very uneven ground and a real trip hazard if the slabs had been removed willy nilly, which could have led to the PC being sued.

Comment – Mr Lenihan – The slabs do need some work but are not in bad condition and provide a safe area where children can and do play.

ST explained that for some years the slabs had been covered by the overgrown hedgerow that prompted the PC to obtain possession of the land in the first place and would not have been useable by anyone.

Comment – Mr Lenihan – That is not so, the slabs were always at least partially visible and usable.

ST points out that the slabs now being a village asset will have to be regularly risk assessed, they are currently uneven and by the standards which apply, are considered to be unsafe. They appear to be amateurishly laid; something will need to be done about them if they remain, and this will be potentially an ongoing cost to the village/PC.

Comment – Mr Lenihan – They were laid well enough to have lasted 40 years with no maintenance whatsoever. We were not consulted at all about this.

Comment – Mrs Wood – I must say that the note allowing removal was ill advised.

ST explains that the PC consulted as best they could.

Question – John Cunningham – If costs were to be involved why did the PC take on the land in the first place without obtaining a sum of money for maintenance in perpetuity? Did the PC exercise due diligence?

SC, who dealt with Somerlee Homes, the former owners, and CDC Legal Department explains that as the PC and villagers had maintained the site with no charge for more than 40 years there was no chance of getting Somerlee to put up a sum to provide for that. It had taken considerable persuading for Somerlee to transfer ownership at all but now the area can be properly maintained and is covered by the PC insurance.

Comment – John Cunningham – In my opinion the slabs should be retained. They are used by many villagers who walk across the fields behind Chinalls Close and as such are a village asset.

Question – Mrs Wood – Could the PC not apply for landfill tax money to re-lay the slabs?

ST explains that the PC would have to approach the landfill tax body for such monies; they are not accessible directly by the village.

Comment – Mr Lenihan – The PC should provide information about the costs in a consultation, perhaps it would be an idea to move the bench from the village entrance and place it there to provide a picnic area.

Comment – John Cunningham – The whole village should be included in the consultation.

ST and JB point out that the residents may not want a seat, which could become a focal point for the youth of the village to gather. It is decided to hold a full consultation, obtaining quotes for the work and circulating the information to the village before any action is taken. SC is to contact Aon the PC insurers for any advice. Proposed MKB, seconded MK, carried unanimously.

## 6. MATTERS ARISING

- 6.01 **Village Notice Boards** The old board has now been taken down but the rail is still to be replaced. c/f
- 6.02 **VAS Signs** The feedback is that the signs being moved has made people more aware of them and notice is being taken.
- 6.03 **List of assets (the pond)** c/f
- 6.04 **Drain Covers** ST confirms that the repair has now been repaired. The map has arrived. SC is to try and obtain more; this can be done without cost by asking for one sheet at a time over the coming months.
- 6.05 **Public Protection and Development letter** c/f
- 6.06 **Carol Service/Christmas Lights** The lights are still to be mended or replaced. c/f
- 6.07 **External Audit** SC has confirmation from BDO of the external audit dates and the internal audit pre-check list has been accepted but SC is still to receive a confirmed date from Phil Hood.
- 6.08 **Automatic pension enrolment** SC has now received a notification letter and reference along with information on compliance which will be on the agenda nearer the time of April 2017.
- 6.09 **Letter from Little Tingewick resident about Mere Lane** SC has given the resident PR's contact details along with some idea of hall availability and cost. Tingewick PC has been informed. SC has asked the resident to let her know if any more information is needed concerning the water company's liability. Tingewick PC's Clerk also has a recollection of the water company carrying out remedial work in the past and will check with councillors to see what work was carried out. c/f
- 6.10 **Playing Field Spinney** MKB is still waiting for confirmation of the new procedures by which charities are able to dispose of assets such as the spinney. He has brought in the definitive map from Mixbury Trust showing the area of the spinney which will be for sale. ST and PR have walked through the spinney and confirm the issue of encroachment and rubbish in the spinney. There is also a concern over the PC boundary between the field and the spinney which was marked some time ago by pegs, these have now deteriorated and only one could be found. KG may have talked with Hugh Smith, Mixbury Trust, MKB is to contact him also and explain concerns at the lack of definitive marking of boundaries. There is more rubbish in the spinney even at such a short time after the spring clean.

ST commented that there were some Heras fencing panels and pallets blocking the pathway between the play area and the new fencing erected around the Thatched House, which had been in place since the new fence was erected. He suggested that this should be brought to the attention of the Mixbury Trust, and the owners of the items (thought to be the occupiers of the Thatched House) be requested to remove these. Alternatively if the items are not removed after reasonable notice, then subject to agreement by the Mixbury Trust, a village working party could be formed to clear the items, including any other items on the land in question, where this is feasible. c/f

- 6.11 **Road Repairs** SC has received news from Fixmystreet that the three problems she reported have been fixed. Councillors confirm that the pothole outside Algarth was definitely not fixed. SC is to query this. c/f
- 6.12 **Spring Clean** The school placed a note in book bags and SC put up posters. This was a great success with 19 villagers turning out and all the refreshments being consumed. The council needed to make two trips to carry away all the rubbish that had been gathered. SC is to write to Tingewick PC regarding a large blue plastic container opposite the Red Lion that was full of water and bags of dog faeces. It may be advisable for them to provide a dog bin beside the stile there as this is the end of a long footpath from Tingewick across the old airfield site.
- 6.13 **Risk Assessment Forms** SC brings in the completed forms for last year. SC has completed the computer form. MKB takes his sheets. JB raises a query regarding the grit bin sheet. One of the bins, at the Mere Rd/Valley Rd junction, is split and as the contents spilling onto the verge would be an environmental hazard it will be necessary to replace this bin. SC is to obtain prices for the April meeting. c/f
- 6.14 **Planning Policy Consultation Workshop** Nobody was able to attend but SC has obtained the notes of the meeting and circulated them.
- 6.15 **Parish Transport Bus Consultation** SC has asked for minutes/notes but is yet to receive any, they will be circulated if they arrive.
- 6.16 **Playing Field Inspection** SC has booked this with John Hicks for June.

## 7. FINANCIAL REPORT

The monthly financial report was presented.

It was reported that there was £2,201.33 in the Treasurer Account and £5,299.37 in the Business Money Manager Account.

The following had been paid out:

£284.75 to SC (general admin – for Clerk and RFO duties, internet costs)

Invoices had been received for the following membership renewals:

Community First - £55 – to be paid – proposed MKB, seconded ST, carried unanimously

OALC - £133.07 – to be paid – proposed MKB, seconded MK, carried unanimously

SLCC - £88 – to be paid – proposed MKB, seconded ST, carried unanimously

OPFA - £40 – to be paid – proposed MKB, seconded MK, carried unanimously

An invoice had been received from CDC for dog bin emptying in the sum of £144.14 – to be paid as a regular payment.

A bacs advice had been received from HMRC for a repayment of VAT in the sum of £284.20, this had not yet arrived in the account.

## 8. S19/S137

No requests have been received.

## 9. URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent business has been carried out.

## 10. FINMERE LANDFILL SITE UPDATE

This was covered in the quarry liaison meeting report, see Item 4 above.

## 11. PLAYING FIELD PROGRESS AND CONDITION

No further progress with the restructuring of the committees has been made yet. The dog fouling signs have been placed. SC has produced a Finmere PC version of the dog fouling poster which is taken by MKB who can produce laminated copies for the notice boards. PR forwarded an email from Jon How, Finmere Sports Association, regarding fouling on the pitch and requesting that the dog training clubs which meet at the village hall be advised. PR gave contact details for both clubs to the Sports Association. SC has written and thanked the Brooks for their work on the diseased tree.

ST has walked the field this month and reports that there are a considerable number of deep rabbit holes behind the goal posts on the far side of the field. These will need refilling. MK has also seen signs of moles along the touch line but although these may be a problem for the sports club if they reach the wicket they are not a hazard for the PC to deal with. There will need to be a working party to fill the rabbit holes and ST agrees to take on the job on this occasion.

## 12. NEW RESIDENTS NOTIFICATIONS

There are new residents next to Falcons Hethe House, Fulwell Road. MKB is to deliver a welcome note. SC is to send the note to JB for future reference.

## 13. TRANSPARENCY CODE

SC has contacted Paul Nash, website administrator, regarding the additional postings required. Paul is happy to post draft minutes and then replace with signed versions. He is also happy to post agendas with the short notice time required. SC cannot be given administrative access as this would mean that she would also have access to other websites that Paul administers through the same server. It is not felt that the PC requires another website at this time. Proposed ST, seconded MKB, carried unanimously.



Nearly all other issues of the code are now covered or will be once the year end accounts documents are posted in June/July. There will have to be an explanation given for any boxes on the internal audit page which are labelled 'not covered', this should not be difficult.

There does need to be additional information on the Asset Register on the web, land listed has to have size/acreage, location, date of acquisition, cost of acquisition and present use shown. MKB has these details on the deeds in his safe and is to send this information to SC.

MKB confirms that when CDC gives him special folders of documents before a meeting these constitute meeting papers. The PC does not circulate such information and so no meeting papers need to be recorded with the agenda on the website.

The matter of the newsletter is raised. It is felt that it would be good to place newsletters on the notice boards in future and also on the web, maybe with previous newsletters also being added.

#### 14. QUEEN'S 90<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

SC contacted the pub, school and Church. The pub and school had no plans and the Rector confirmed that the Church would be holding a service but that the PCC would be very keen to work together with the village to make a nice event.

MKB has arranged a meeting in the village hall on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> of March and a newsletter has been circulated. SC has received a letter regarding commemorative medals which can be given out at little cost, less than £2 each. It is felt that it might be nice to provide medals for the children at the school. The medal is to be taken to the meeting and discussed and the PC would be willing to spend some S137 monies on such an item. Proposed MKB, seconded AH, carried unanimously.

#### 15. LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS REGISTER

SC has spoken with Anita Bilbo, villager, and she is happy to take on the task of compiling the list providing there is no time constraint. ST is to hand all the paperwork over to her.

#### 16. MEETING DATES FOR APRIL AND MAY

The meeting for April is to be held on the first Tuesday as normal, April 5<sup>th</sup>. The May meetings are not constrained by elections this year. The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council is to be held on May 3<sup>rd</sup> when officers will be appointed. The Annual Parish Meeting is to be held on May 10<sup>th</sup> when the officers will be announced. The agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting is to be set at the April meeting so that SC can circulate invites in plenty of time.

## 17. CHERWELL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY CONSULTATION

MKB explains that this is to do with the money given by developers to offset costs of extra infrastructure requirement, e.g. rubbish collection. Up to now this money was gathered under Section 106 and was solely used for the area of development. The new proposal is for the money to be held at council level, levied at an amount per square metre for various constructions, and that a proportion can be given to the parish for good works. MKB is to check the paperwork and circulate any information.

## 18. PARISH REMUNERATION PANEL'S REPORT

This has now been received. The PC decides again not to offer allowances in the coming year. Proposed MKB, seconded AH, carried unanimously. SC is to post receipt of the report on the notice board.

## 19. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Opes – Application to continue development without complying with Conditions 1, 7, 17 and 26 (to allow the storage of Refuse Derived Fuel and Solid Recovered Fuel outside the storage bay at the consented MRF) – subject of planning permission 10/00361/CM and to amend the operational hours of the MRF and to extend the acoustic barriers – subject of planning permission 15/00245/OCC – permission granted

16/00172/F – The Crow's Nest, 1 Chinalls Close – single storey rear extension – It is not felt that this development would impact on any neighbours, the PC has no objections but MKB will take the application and consult before returning it. Any problems are to be circulated under urgent business. SC has obtained an extension till Friday March 11<sup>th</sup>. Following the discussion of Chinalls Close new paving, see Item 3 above, the PC will make the comment that contractor vehicles should be discouraged from parking on the new paving.

## 20. CORRESPONDENCE

### **Correspondence for meeting –**

OCC letter concerning 'simplification of government' – letter about a proposal for a different unitary authority – the PC has no opinion

Commemorative medal for Queen's birthday letter – see Item 14 above

Pensions regulator information – see Item 6 above

Community First (formerly ORCC) membership renewal – see Item 7 above

OALC membership renewal – see Item 7 above

SLCC membership renewal – see Item 7 above

OPFA membership renewal – see Item 7 above

CDC dog bin invoice – see Item 7 above

HMRC bacs advice for VAT return – see Item 7 above

**Emails printed –**

Email from CF about fire at MRF – see Item 3 above

Email about the Bicester Neighbourhood Meeting on March 16<sup>th</sup> – nobody is able to attend, SC is to request minutes or notes

Email about flood defences – these are thought to be too expensive and unnecessary

Email from PR regarding dog mess on the playing field – see Item 11 above

**Emails forwarded –**

Speed awareness wheelie bin stickers info – not thought to be appropriate

Transparency code info – see Item 13 above

OALC training in March and April – this was not thought necessary

Chinalls Close paving slabs email – see Item 5 above

Neighbourhood Plan roadshow invite – nobody able to attend, details will be on their website

Flags and bunting for Queen’s birthday info – this will not be necessary

Update about the Queen’s birthday meeting – see Item 14 above

Parish workshop notes – see Item 6 above

FPC data protection policy – this is to be an agenda item in April

FPC equality and diversity policy – this is to be an agenda item in April

OALC update – news of a petition for planning powers for PC’s – to be an agenda item in April, news of an update to financial regulations – to be an agenda item in April, news of upcoming changes to data protection – to be an agenda item in April, news of Oxfordshire Together, the scheme by which OCC hopes to pass responsibility for certain services to the PC’s. Finmere PC already has a grass cutting agreement. The other services can be quite difficult to offer, SC is to contact CF and ask for more details of grants and help available if the PC do choose to take these responsibilities onboard. This is to be an agenda item in April.

Usual reports

## 21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

**Bark for play area** PR and ST have been making safe the timber surround in the play area and more bark is needed to fill in the space properly. This is to be provided under S137, proposed MKB, seconded MK, carried unanimously. PR is to get the invoice made out to the PC and organise this before the end of March.

**Governance** SC has contacted OALC regarding the frequency at which our governance should be reviewed. OALC has supplied information and SC is to set up a timetable for these reviews so that the PC can remain compliant. This is to be circulated.

## 19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2016.

Meeting closed at 11.05 p.m.

## CORRESPONDENCE CIRCULATED

Clerks and Councils Direct March 2016