



SPEEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ONLINE ON MONDAY 22ND MARCH 2021 AT 7PM

Present	Parish Councillors	Cllr Dudman (Chair), Cllr Amirثارaj (Vice-Chair), Cllr Phillips, Cllr Black, Cllr Newell-Hart, Cllr Gourley, Cllr Booth, Cllr Clifford, Cllr Butter
In Attendance		Cllr Doherty (District Ward Councillor) Laura Farris MP
Members of the Public		None Present
Clerk & RFO		Jean Lindsell

Meeting started at 7.04pm

Resolution	Item	Action
	<p>1. Apologies: None</p> <p>2. Declaration of Interests</p> <p>Cllr Clifford declared an interest in Item 13.2. Cllr Clifford is Chair of St Barts Foundation whose treasurer is married to an individual connected to Item 13.2 although not personally known to Cllr Clifford.</p> <p>Cllr Phillips declared an interest in Items 13.1 and 13.2. Cllr Phillips lives adjacent to Stockcross Recreation Ground.</p> <p>3. Welcome – Laura Farris MP</p> <p>Cllr Dudman welcomed Laura Farris MP and thanked her for taking the time to join the meeting.</p> <p>3.1 Introduction from Laura Farris MP</p> <p>Laura Farris advised since starting to attend parish council meetings they had all been held remotely and she looked forward to meeting all Councillors face to face at some stage in the future but felt it had been an excellent opportunity to hear directly from Parish Councillors. Laura added there might be areas where she could assist and gave examples from other parish council such as disused land queries and speeding issues.</p> <p>Laura Farris asked members of the Council to raise any questions they might have not only relating to matters within the Parish but also any national issues such as the vaccination programme</p> <p>3.2 Question and Answer Session</p> <p>Cllr Dudman asked if there was any indication of an extension in legislation allowing parish council's to continue holding remote meetings in light of the current legislation coming to an end on 7th May and the restrictions regarding meeting indoors until late June contained within the Government's roadmap.</p> <p>Laura Farris advised she had already taken this up with MHCLG and the only information she had received was that guidance was coming imminently however other ministers had also taken this up as it was clear that at this point in time it was not safe for parish councils to meet face to face.</p> <p>Laura Farris added that as no formal announcement had been issued to date clearly stating that no remote meetings could take place after 7th May this would suggest that when there is an answer it would be for a continuation albeit with time limitations.</p> <p>Cllr Phillips raised a question relating to public transport and improvements to the</p>	



infrastructure and gave the example of how difficult it was to travel to Oxford unless driving using the A34 or by train via Reading and with money becoming available for improvements were there plans for developing the north south route.

Laura Farris acknowledged the focus of transport investment was on east west which started with the electrification of the GWR line and although Crossrail had been delayed it was now moving forward to opening together with the smart motorway and R3 into London. Laura Farris added there was money coming through from the Department for Transport to Highways England for the A34 but that was just about safety to the road system and agreed there should be provision for public transport between Newbury and Oxford.

Laura Farris advised there had just been an announcement regarding investment in bus travel and her intention was to put in a pitch for a bus route to link these two areas.

Cllr Newell-Hart advised SPC had put forward a proposal to WBC for a footpath from the A4 to Stockcross which would not only open accessibility for foot traffic to and from Newbury but also to the national footpaths and cycle ways and asked what the possibilities were about this project being followed through.

Laura Farris asked Cllr Doherty to respond.

Cllr Doherty advised she was already working with SPC members and was waiting for an assessment to be carried out and referred to the Active Travel proposals and in particular the heat map and urged everyone to have input. Cllr Doherty further advised the project was a possibility but a feasibility study had to be completed first and as soon as that was done she would have further information.

Laura Farris asked Cllr Doherty if she was aware of any other money available in light of all the various schemes being unveiled.

Cllr Doherty advised WBC had only had the Active Travel Phase 2 allocation and although she was not aware of any other funds currently available the transport team was always on the lookout for funding opportunities.

Laura Farris asked Cllr Doherty to keep in touch regarding this as there were regular announcements about various pots of money and sometimes it was possible to bid for funds from a different pot.

Cllr Dudman advised as a point of information that Speen was a relatively unique parish in that it had an urban area which joined Newbury and a number of very rural areas comprising Marsh Benham, Stockcross, Woodspeen and Bagnor and therefore had quite diverse requirements.

Cllr Phillips asked if the Cumbrian Coal Mine came to a vote in the House of Commons what the MPs position would be.

Laura Farris did not think the matter would come to a vote as she felt that a decision had already been taken and her information was that it had been pulled but added at this point in time she did not think any MP who did not have prior knowledge of the project would have enough knowledge to know how they were going to vote as it had not been presented in a way that neither primary or secondary legislation would be where MPs would scrutinise and discuss with Ministers.

Cllr Phillips asked if Laura Farris now had a feeling of relief.

Laura Farris advised her observation was that given the amount of work and investment going into the pathway to reaching net zero by 2050 together with the huge plans that have been unveiled from offshore wind farms to the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles to hydrogen investment and gigabyte factories the project sat quite uneasily with all those announcements and therefore surprised quite a lot of MPs. The pitch was not rolled in the way the Government would normally roll a pitch it was a headline that came and then went and she herself had not been

Cllr Doherty

Resolved	<p>invited to discuss it with Ministers.</p> <p>Laura Farris further advised she did not know how long it had been considered or why it had been pulled and although the effort to reach net zero by 2050 was considerable felt there could be projects that arise which might not be considered environmentally friendly HS2 being such an example.</p> <p>The Clerk asked if there were any steps being taken to review the Local Government Act 1972 with regard to giving Councils the option of holding of remote, hybrid and face to face meetings in light of the impending end of current legislation on 7th May. The Clerk added there was a lack of clarity in the definition of 'place' in respect of meetings in the 1972 Act particularly as the internet was not available to the public at that time and therefore the Act could not have referred to remote meetings in anyway.</p> <p>Laura Farris advised she did not know the answer but felt it would be madness for MPs not to be both considering it and making the case to MHCLG if Councils felt it would be beneficial. Laura Farris added that in every other aspect of working life MPs were thinking very hard about how to achieve hybrid working patterns and flexible working and knew that in Parliament some meetings would continue to be conducted remotely as it was not worth insisting on 50 MPs to always walk to get to a meeting and felt particularly when meetings were held in the evening it was even more beneficial to hold these remotely particularly during winter.</p> <p>Cllr Clifford asked what the MPs impressions were of this level of local government.</p> <p>Laura Farris felt on the whole parish councils were vibrant being an important source of democracy and an ideal way for the community to have their say.</p> <p>Cllr Gourley asked if there had been evidence of success during the pandemic at the parish level and was there more decentralisation of power foreseen.</p> <p>Laura Farris felt the level of response to the pandemic across West Berkshire would not have been so high without parish councils and community groups and the overlap between those two and that central Government and local government had been working hand in hand. In addition the community spirit was evident particularly in helping to combat loneliness and hoped this would continue regardless of the pandemic.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty advised the Rebuilding Communities Together team in West Berkshire were already starting to work on how to continue to enable and engage with the community and empower the various groups.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman felt communication was key which would be the challenge moving forward in order to retain that community spirit.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman thanked Laura for attending the meeting.</p> <p>Laura Farris MP left the meeting</p> <p>4. Chair Opening Remarks</p> <p>Cllr Dudman reminded Councillors that Tuesday 23rd March was National Reflection Day and added SPC had received a certificate of recognition from WBC in respect of the volunteer work.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman thanked all Councillors for responding promptly to the Clerk's emails and asked for this to continue.</p> <p>5. Open Session – no Members of the Public present</p> <p>6. Minutes – to approve the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 22-02-21 (draft)</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Dudman Seconder: Cllr Newell-Hart All in Favour</p>
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Resolved	<p>Cllr Phillips updated on an action from the previous minutes that he had received information from the Clerk regarding insurance cover that would be required for a portaloo at Stockcross Recreation Ground which had been raised with the three potential suppliers. Cllr Phillips felt based on responses received insurance cover would probably have to be added to SPC's policy.</p> <p>7. Financial Report Clerk as RFO</p> <p>7.1 Balance in bank as at 22-02-21 reported as £67,848.10</p> <p>7.2 To retrospectively note invoice payments made for February 2021 All Councillors noted payments made.</p> <p>7.3 Proposal: To accept Finance Reports to 28-02-21 Proposer: Cllr Black Seconder: Cllr Newell-Hart All in Favour</p> <p>7.4 New Financial Reports – to review new financial charts for 2021/22</p> <p>Cllr Butter queried why the use of charts was being considered.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman advised the aim was provide a high level snapshot of SPC's finances via graphical representation which could be easier to review.</p> <p>The Clerk advised three chart types (pie, clustered column and waterfall) had been used dependent upon which type provided the best representation of the numbers as follows:</p> <p>Total Bank Balance Chart (pie) – showed how SPC's total bank balance at any given time was broken down into general reserves, earmarked reserves and remaining balance</p> <p>Earmarked Reserves (waterfall) – showed the opening earmarked reserves at the start of the financial year, less spend to date, less committed spend and remaining balance.</p> <p>Projected Bank Balance to Yearend (waterfall) – showed SPC's total bank balance including projected receipts, less projected expenditure, less total reserves and remaining projected unallocated balance.</p> <p>Budget Forecast to Yearend (waterfall) – showed total operational budget less actuals to date, less forecast spend to yearend and remaining budget at yearend.</p> <p>Budget Forecast to Yearend – External Works and Admin Costs (clustered column) – showed budget for the various budget categories, less actuals to date, less forecast spend to date and remaining balances.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart advised the Finance Committee were recommending the use of charts as it was felt these types of reports provided a wider view of SPC's finances whilst still be supported by the lower level detail which would still be available to view if required.</p> <p>Cllr Booth asked if it would be possible to put all text within the segments of the pie chart rather than some being in a table on the side.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman advised this would be investigated but felt this might not be possible with Excel charts.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman advised all comments had been noted and the charts would continue to be worked on.</p> <p>8. District Ward Report (previously circulated)</p> <p>Cllr Doherty advised she would follow up on the A4 to Stockcross footpath feasibility and encouraged Councillors for their input on the Active Travel consultation.</p>
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	<p>Cllr Doherty also advised there was a new use of CIL and a pilot had been carried out whereby local groups could bid for CIL funding and the recommendation would be to continue that form and it would be beneficial to look at projects that SPC might wish to bid on.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty added she was in communication with the Clerk regarding the next round of Members' Bids which was expected to be announced shortly and deadlines would be around mid-June.</p> <p>Cllr Phillips advised some parishioners found the opening screen for the heat map very difficult to understand/navigate.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty advised she would feed that information back,</p> <p>Cllr Dudman asked if there was any feedback on the presence of the COVID Marshalls.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty advised the Marshalls had been very busy and appeared to have been well received and thought people appreciated a visible presence as a reminder of the restrictions rather than having to read signs and they had also been a good source of local intelligence. Cllr Doherty further advised the Marshalls were due to finish mid-May.</p> <p>Cllr Clifford asked about the return to school.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty advised attendance rates had been higher than pre COVID and the children were all eager to get back but it had also been a very positive experience not only for children but also parents and staff. Cllr Doherty added that lateral flow testing had been key and although there had been one small outbreak of the virus this had always been expected with the return to school.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart asked if there had been any evidence of queue jumping to get vaccinated.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty advised there was no evidence of this in West Berkshire but there had been an element of confusion particularly around the racecourse. Originally people had been asked to wait for their GP to make contact but when cohort 6 was prioritised those in cohort 6 were asked to go to a mass vaccination site which highlighted issues around travel etc. However the racecourse had now opened up to accept cohort 6.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman asked for Cllr Doherty's view on the purpose of settlement boundaries.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty felt it was important to be plan lead and if MHCLG stick to honouring those plans of preventing developers just putting development where they want to then settlements were a good thing but acknowledged that within her ward this had not occurred.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman advised that in Speen the development of the land between Lambourn Road and Bath Road had been outside the boundary issued in 2017 however the latest issue of the boundary showed it had been moved to now include this development.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty advised she did not know the history of this particular settlement boundary but it was important to keep pushing to adhere to the Local Plan.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty advised she would look into the change in the boundary.</p> <p>Cllr Butter advised she had looked at the Stockcross boundary and presumed it had been revised to take into account developments. Cllr Butter further advised there were issues with the Stockcross boundary as the historic settlement was around the church and vicarage which were now not included within the boundary.</p> <p>Cllr Doherty left the meeting</p> <p>9. Finance Committee</p> <p>9.1 Minutes – to receive the Minutes of the Finance Committee held on 09-03-21</p>	Cllr Doherty
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	<p>(draft)</p> <p>No questions raised.</p> <p>9.2 2020/21 Budget Underspend</p> <p>Proposal: To approve the transfer of £657 to Earmarked Reserves from 2020/21 Budget underspend and remaining underspend as at year end to be transferred to Unallocated Reserves as recommended by Finance Committee</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Black Seconder: Cllr Dudman All in Favour</p>	
Resolved	<p>9.3 Policies</p> <p>Proposal: To approve the following policies be adopted for 2021/22 as recommended by Finance Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Regulations• Risk Management Assessment• Reserves Policy• Investment Strategy• Internal Audit Policy <p>Proposer: Cllr Dudman Seconder: Cllr Newell-Hart All in Favour</p> <p>10. Planning & Highways Committee</p> <p>10.1 SPC Website Planning Application Information</p> <p>Cllr Booth advised he had not received any specific feedback and proposed that his suggestions be adopted.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart emphasised the importance of highlighting any specific issues such as safety and traffic concerns when reviewing planning applications so that these were fed back to WBC.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman summarised Cllr Booth's proposal that the information published on SPC's website provide direct links to individual planning applications on WBC's planning portal plus a copy of SPC's comments submitted to WBC.</p> <p>The Clerk advised she had already added a brief guide to planning relating to the role of SPC and WBC to the website.</p> <p>All Councillors agreed with Cllr Booth's suggestions.</p> <p>11. Development</p> <p>11.1 Parish Improvement Plan</p> <p>Cllr Black gave an update on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speen Pavilion Improvements – in progress• Speen Recreation Ground Picnic Bench – in progress• Dog Bins – purchased awaiting delivery• Snake Lane/Rookwood Salt Bin – order placed• Stockcross Telephone Box Defibrillator – one quote received further quotes to be obtained• War Memorial Project – specification of works being updated in preparation for obtaining quotes in order to submit Members' Bid application. Cllr Booth	

	<p>advised he had completed a scale drawing of the site marking the existing and planned improvements. Cllr Booth added he intended to use the Stockcross footpath specification for the footpath element and add either stone or paving slabs for access to the actual War Memorial. The Specification of Works for the project would then be updated.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman felt it was clear from what Laura Farris had said earlier there were other 'pots' of money potentially available and encouraged the WP to build up a database of projects.</p> <p>Cllr Gourley agreed and felt projects should be identified as small, medium and larger long term projects and the return on investment should be looked at where appropriate.</p> <p>11.2 Stockcross to A34 Footpath Project</p> <p>Cllr Phillips advised no further update other than waiting for the results of the feasibility work by WBC as already discussed under Item 8.</p> <p>Cllr Gourley advised that the project had been mentioned at a recent Spokes meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Phillips added that a parishioner had passed on information about the project to the Ramblers Association so hoped support would be forthcoming.</p>
Resolved	<p>12. Maintenance</p> <p>11.1 Parish Maintenance & Repairs Register</p> <p>The Clerk advised no new items to report.</p> <p>13. Stockcross Recreation Ground</p> <p>13.1 Proposal: To approve amendment to Grass and Hedge Cutting Contract to include hedge cutting at Stockcross Recreation Ground at an additional cost of £36+VAT per month as agreed in 2021/22 budget</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Booth Seconder: Cllr Black All in Favour</p>
Resolved	<p>13.2 Proposal: To approve no invoice be raised for the hire of Stockcross Recreation Ground for the period 1st November 2020 to 31st March 2021 due to lockdown restrictions not permitting youth grassroots football</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Dudman Seconder: Cllr Phillips All in Favour</p> <p>14. Future Meetings – to discuss the implications of returning to face to face meetings in May if current regulations are not extended</p> <p>Cllr Dudman felt having reviewed the options previously circulated by the Clerk Option 2 (to continue with remote meetings until such time as it was safe to resume face to face meetings) was his preference.</p> <p>Cllr Amirtharaj advised he wished to return to face to face meetings as soon as possible but acknowledged that he had pushed for remote meetings pre COVID. Cllr Amirtharaj added he would have a preference for a mix of remote and face to face meetings.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman clarified that as soon as the Council were able to meet face to face with all members in attendance together with any members of the public this should happen however the discussion was relating to an interim measure until such time as restrictions are lifted regarding the number of people permitted to meet inside bearing in mind the current regulations permitting remote meetings end on 7th May.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman added it was important to recognise there was a risk involved with holding any remote meetings after 7th May as any decisions made could be</p>



	<p>deemed unlawful and it might then be necessary to ratify those decisions when the Council was able to meet face to face.</p> <p>Cllr Clifford felt it was hard to believe the powers that be would not extend the ability for councils to meet remotely and it was better that all Councillors could continue to meet remotely for continuity of business. Cllr Clifford added that in the longer term she felt there was significant virtue in remote meetings as well as face to face meetings and hoped councils would be able to have a mix.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman thought a good option for the future might be that the Council's statutory meetings be held face to face and the others be held remotely.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart suggested a statement prefaced any future remote meetings acknowledging the possibility that decisions might require ratification.</p> <p>The Clerk referred back to Item 3 and the lack of clarification on the interpretation of the LGA 1972 and added that if any decisions taken after 7th May in a remote meeting were challenged this would have to be decided in the courts.</p> <p>Cllr Booth suggested if SPC was forced to hold a face to face meeting it might be worth considering Majendie Hall due to its size and it should be COVID secure.</p> <p>All Councillors agreed to continue with remote meetings in the interim subject to continuous review.</p> <p>15. Correspondence: To receive & consider correspondence (all relevant correspondence is circulated electronically on receipt and where possible dealt with by the Clerk) – None to report</p> <p>16. Matters for consideration and information arising after the preparation of this Agenda which the Chair agrees to take as urgent (all Councillors) None raised</p> <p>17. Date of Meeting – Monday 17th May 2021</p> <p>18. Exclusion of the Press and Public</p> <p>No vote required as no PART II items</p> <p>The meeting closed at 9.04pm</p>	
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Signed:	Name (print):	Date:
		Position:

Abbreviations Used:

SPC = Speen Parish Council
WBC = West Berkshire Council
WP = Working Party
MHCLG = Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government
GWR – Great Western Railway
LGA – Local Government Act