

LONG COMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 1st March 2021 by Zoom

Present: Councillors Simon Bing (Chair), Lindsay Forbes, Bill Cook, Harry Dodds and Linny King, District Councillor Sarah Whalley-Hoggins and 7 members of the public.

Councillor Janet Blackwell took the minutes

1. Apologies County Councillor Jo Barker

2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest: None declared

3. To approve the Minutes of 1st February 2021

Proposed by Councillor Dodds, seconded by Councillor King and carried

4. Outgoing Chairman's Address and appointment of new Clerk

Councillor Cook reflected on his time as Chair and thanked Councillors for their support. Councillor Cook also announced the appointment of a new Clerk, Sam Weller.

5. Public Forum

Mary McFarlane asked for details of the cost of The Hollows project and where the money was coming from. Councillor Bing replied this was on the Agenda and the information would be shared then.

Paul Field thanked the Council for their work for the village.

6. Report from the District Councillor

Councillor Whalley Hoggins reported on a full council meeting to discuss the proposed super south amalgamation, the current unemployment rate in the area, green bin uptake proposed new recycling plant at Coventry and amended car parking charges. There is also likely to be an increase in Council Tax. Councillor Whalley-Hoggins also expressed her feeling that Long Compton was well placed to face whatever comes along and is well thought of. There is a concern about the South Warks Local Plan and we have heard not more from the SAP. Councillor Whalley-Hoggins also thanked our outgoing Chair for the welcome she had received here.

7. Planning

21/00385/FUL

49 Main Street

No objection

An enforcement update was thought very unsatisfactory

8. Finance

a. To approve the Budget Tracker and Bank Reconciliation

Proposed by Councillor Forbes, seconded by Councillor Bing and carried

Councillor Cook gave his estimated end of year figures

- b. To approve the payments as listed.
Proposed by Councillor Cook, seconded by Councillor Forbes and carried
- c. Grants
 - c.i. To consider grant for Ebenezer
It was agreed to consider a grant of £250 next month at the start of the new financial year.
 - c.ii. To consider Greenshoots Funding – potential grant application
Councillor Bing outlined the possibilities this could provide for the tree works the Council needs to do and will have something for the Council to consider next month.

9. Warwickshire Local Transport Consultation

Councillor Blackwell reported that she had requested a hard copy of the survey and would chase this up.

10. Village issues

- a. **To consider grass cutting contract**
Following discussion, it was agreed to accept the tender from Lawns 2 Mow.
Proposed by Councillor Forbes, seconded by Councillor Dodds and carried
The number of cuts was discussed and agreed at continuing with four cuts to the churchyard 8 cuts to the village hall and increasing the village cuts to 12.
Councillor Forbes also reported that following a conversation with a contractor, the pond at Weston Court does not require any work unless the pipe entrances become blocked.
Proposed by Councillor Bing, seconded by Councillor Cook and carried.
- b. **To consider Hollows building and correspondence**
The correspondence was discussed and a response agreed.
The costs and colour of the building for The Hollows were discussed and it was agreed on the colour green and to proceed with the purchase.
Proposed by Councillor Dodds, seconded by Councillor Forbes and carried.
- c. **To consider letter to SDC and Chair of Allotment Group on Taylor's Allotments**
These had been previously circulated and it was agreed to send them.
Proposed by Councillor Cook, seconded by Councillor Forbes and carried.
- d. **To consider delegated powers to Clerk for tree planning applications and allotment sheds etc.**
It was agreed to defer this item.
- e. **Councillor to report on the Village Project**
Councillor Cook reported on the difficulties faced with this project due to the Covid crisis, but felt Jamie was the right person to carry on with this project and to revise it in light of the circumstances. Councillor Cook also agreed to write to the Heritage Lottery Fund explaining the delay in completing the project, he also requested that the third stage payment be split in half with the first half payable next month.
Proposed by Councillor Forbes, seconded by Councillor Bing and carried.
- f. **Councillor Cook to report on Defibrillators**
Councillor Cook reported that this has been passed from the West Midlands Ambulance service to a central Defibrillator Database, and they have no record of our machines. A form to record these is simple to complete but does require a co-ordinator and it was agreed to approach Juliet Druce and/or Shipston first Responders. Councillor Cook will follow this up.

A member of the public emphasised the importance of the Defibrillators and the need to keep them in use and recorded.

- g. **To consider inconsiderate parking by visitors**
Following discussion, it was agreed to trial some parking signs at approximate £7 each.
Proposed by Councillor Dodds, seconded by Councillor Cook and carried.
- h. **To consider Dark Skies**
The Council noted that light pollution is becoming an issue. Councillor Dodds agreed to write a robust response to be included in the revision of the NP.
- i. **To consider repair of Play Equipment**
Prices quoted seem extremely expensive, the problem being whilst wooded play equipment is nice looking it doesn't last.
It was agreed to find out if we got the work done ourselves would the preferred inspection company be willing to inspect it.

11. Urgent information for Councillors and Items for the next Agenda

Future Meetings
Dark Skies
Quarry noise
Play Equipment
Hollows progress
Dog Waste Bins
Allotments

12. To propose exclusion of the public to discuss staffing issues.

Following discussion, it was agreed to send a formal offer of employment with a revised contract.

Appendix – documents relating to item 10c

LONG COMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

Mr David Buckland,
Chief Executive,
Stratford upon Avon District Council
david.buckland@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Wednesday 3rd March 2021

The Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012
Allotment at Long Compton Warwickshire Part of WK459053
Landowner's request for review of decision, under the provisions of The Localism Act 2011 (S92)

Dear Sir,

In the absence of prior consultation between the landowner (Long Compton Parish Council) and the applicants (Long Compton Allotments Society) the landowner wishes to present, for consideration in the review, the points it would have made, had it been asked.

1. At no point in the life of the present Parish Council of Long Compton has the Council made any statement to suggest that it was considering the sale of Taylor's Allotments.
2. No individual Councillor has made any such statement, either.
3. The evidential base on which the Allotments Society has structured its application is non-existent, beyond the unsubstantiated rumour and gossip circulating within and generated by its own ranks. Had it made a simple request to the Parish Council for information, this whole process would have been rendered unnecessary.
4. The Parish Council has in reserve sufficient land to accommodate foreseeable housing developments, and has no need of any more. It therefore has no incentive to sell allotment land.
5. The Parish Council is well aware of the constraints contingent on the sale of allotment land, which cannot be done without the express permission of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Amplification of Point 5, above.

Allotment disposal guidance: Safeguards and alternatives
January 2014, Department for Communities and Local Government

"Where a local authority has purchased or appropriated land for use as allotments the local authority shall not sell, appropriate, use or dispose of the land for any purpose other than use for allotments without the consent of the Secretary of State".

In order to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State, the local authority must satisfy four criteria:

- a) The allotment in question is not necessary and is surplus to requirement;
- b) The number of people on the waiting list has been effectively taken into account;
- c) The council has actively promoted and publicised the availability of sites and has consulted the National Allotment Society; and
- d) The implications of disposal for other relevant policies, in particular local plan policies, have been taken into account.

Long Compton Parish Council would be unable to satisfy criteria a) and d), and would therefore be unable to proceed.

If, in other circumstances, it were successful in any application to sell, then it would have to provide alternative accommodation for existing allotment holders. They would not lose out.

The Parish Council regards Taylor's Allotments as a community asset, to which it owes an inviolable duty of care, as it has since 1919, when the land was purchased, along with land on Buryway Lane and Barton Road, when the Northampton Estate was sold. The allotments have been managed, by the Parish, and without fuss, for over 100 years. In that context, the registration of the land as an Asset of Community Value seems superfluous, and derogatory to the custodianship exercised by the Parish Council for so long.

The Parish Council is at a loss to understand why the Allotment Society chose to proceed with this application, in the light of the information offered by the Parish Council. There was no threat to the Allotments, as the Association was in due course told – though, in the light of that knowledge, it failed to withdraw its application. The Association’s behaviour, attitude, and unwillingness to establish and to work with the facts of the case might be construed as vexatious. Certainly, the Council and individual Councillors have been considerably distressed by the suggestion that they lacked integrity and commitment to the values of the community. Their trustworthiness and reliability have been called into question by the registration of the Allotments as a Community Asset, which will cast its shadow over the Council for as long as the registration remains in force.

Finally, the Parish Council wishes to question the accuracy of two statements made by the Applicant in the application form. If the statements made on the application form are not accurate, then the validity of the application would be called into question. The Parish Council does not have access to the information submitted, and therefore cannot check its accuracy.

In *Section A4 Local Connection*, the applicant states ‘The Group consists entirely of residents of Long Compton’. Given that some allotment holders are not resident within the village or, indeed, within the County, this statement should be checked before being accepted as accurate.

The applicant further confirms in Section A6 of the application form, ‘that at least 21 members are included on Stratford District Council’s register of electors’. Again, because a number of allotment holders are not residents within the county, it is possible that fewer than 21 members are in fact on SDC’s electoral roll. That assertion from the application form should also be checked.

Please see attached the correspondence between the Chair of the Parish Council and the Chair of the Allotments Society in appendix 1 and 2.

Yours sincerely

Simon Bing

Chairman.

For and on behalf of Long Compton Parish council

Appendix 1.

On Mon, 30 Nov 2020 at 14:46, Bill Cook wrote:

Dear Paul,

Thank you for letting us know of your application to register Taylor’s Allotments as a community asset.

I understand that this was triggered by a rumour circulating amongst some allotment holders that the Parish Council intended to abandon its Neighbourhood Plan and look to use the allotment land

for housing purposes. Further, that this had been discussed by the Council in items on our agenda from which the public were excluded.

As your Council, we are frankly baffled by this suggestion. From a practical perspective, we would not be able materially to change our Neighbourhood Plan without a formal review, a detailed examination from the Planning Inspectorate and the District Council, a second Parish referendum and a decision by the District Council to “make” any revised plan. Furthermore, we would not be able to change the status of the allotment land without the permission of the Secretary of State, for which we would need to apply formally and publicly. None of this could have happened “in private”.

Leaving aside the practicalities, Long Compton Parish Council has fought tooth and nail over the past five years to sustain its Neighbourhood Plan. We have led two prolonged battles in the planning appeals process which stopped developers building on land protected by the Neighbourhood Plan. We have just successfully had Long Compton removed from Stratford’s Site Allocation Plan (this took six months of active lobbying, endless meetings and the production of reports refuting District Council arguments). Long Compton is known by District planners and developers as a “difficult” place to build because, on every occasion, we insist on adherence to the Neighbourhood Plan, compliance with our local Design Statement and with conditions imposed by planning permissions and tree protection orders.

As a Council and as a collection of individual Councillors we are profoundly disappointed and genuinely distressed that a rumour of the sort which triggered your decision to apply for community asset status could have been allowed to circulate without the courtesy of an early approach to the Council and without reference to the Council’s extensive track record of protecting the Parish (all of which is readily available in the public domain). We welcome the existence of the Allotment Association and what you have been able to achieve collectively, but, to be frank, we do not welcome it becoming a source of false, uncorroborated and very hurtful rumours. Should any similar rumours emerge in the future, can I suggest that your first action be contact with any Councillor or our Clerk (once we have a Clerk in place following Elizabeth’s departure).

Returning to practicalities, we have looked closely at community asset status ourselves to provide a further level of protection for the Parish. It does not deliver as much as it sounds as if it is going to. Basically, it means that, if an asset is to be sold, the “community” is given time and an opportunity to bid to acquire the asset. If sufficient funds cannot be raised in time (six months) the sale goes ahead regardless.

I hope that this letter and the conversations you have now had with a Councillor will set the Association’s mind at rest and put an end to this nonsensical rumour. The Parish Council would, of course, have no objection to the circulation of this letter amongst your colleagues.

Regards,

Bill Cook
Chair, Long Compton Parish Council

Sent from my iPad

Appendix 2.

Dear Bill,

Thank you for your email acknowledging our registration of Taylors Allotments as a Community Asset. As Chairman I appreciate your writing to me and I have registered your clear and unequivocal comments about the unlikely possibilities of ever developing the Allotments, together with the steps you or any future Council would have to take in order to achieve a development, this is very reassuring to hear thank you.

Unfortunately although I was under the impression that the Allotments were virtually (or should I say definitely) sacrosanct this was not confirmed when I put it to a member of the Council some 2 years ago with the development of Park Court, the reply was there are "ways and means", couple this with the tidying up of Derek's Garage area with a lot of work going on, and the fact that an "overactive " imagination could think infill was being considered then one can see where rumours could begin.

We also approached another Councillor who (quite correctly considering her position on the Parish Council) declined to sign up, but at no point were we advised in the terms you have used, this would have saved a great deal of rumour mongering and time on our behalf had we been pointed in that direction, I for one would certainly have dug considerably deeper.

Finally it always raises the temperature when, combined with the possibilities conjured up by overactive imaginations, there is a part of the Council Meeting declared as "closed" for whatever reason justifiable or not.

In conclusion it remains for me to ;

Apologise for the understandable distress and hurt caused to Members by the Action taken (although I trust this will enable and back up future Councillors should pressure ever be brought to bear for any future development).

To thank you all on the Parish Council for the obvious amount of work you all do on our behalf 365 days of the year in your own time and occasionally with not enough appreciation.....I fear we do not scan the Parish website as much we should, and in some instances perhaps too much without an in depth understanding!

And finally we must all perhaps maintain better communication on a one to one basis by talking to each other more, Covid notwithstanding, and attend a few more Council Meetings when we can.

The Roadside Barriers going up are a vast improvement on the old scaffold poles and look the part, another example of, no doubt, persistent lobbying on your part of the highways team.

Please convey my thanks, on behalf of the Allotment Society, to everybody on the Council and our apologies for your distress,

yours

Paul,

Chairman of Taylors Allotments Society.

THANK YOU.