

COOKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Cookham Parish Council Held in the Community Room on Tuesday 1st October 2024, at 7.30pm

PRESENT: Cllrs. M. Howard (In the chair), C. Aisladie, L. Austin, M. Brar, E. Bune, T. Caen, J. Edwards, M-L. Kellaway, R. Kellaway, H. Pleming and L. Tull.

Also Present: Mrs. Hilda Holder (Locum Clerk)
One member of the public, but no Press, were present.

OPEN FORUM:

Paula Linegar said that, having discussed the Council's previous proposals at the last meeting, she had been sent new proposals which attempted to limit her grazing rights and to oblige her to mow in the summer with no suggestion of a reduction in rent. Over the last 40 years she had needed to use the field at different times of the year and sometimes not at all. She was disappointed that, notwithstanding talks taking place since April, the Council had still not committed to the improvement to the facilities it had been discussing. She noted that the whole discussion seemed to have been triggered by Wild Cookham wishing to increase bio-diversity but she had not seen any survey results yet. Cllr. Pleming explained the issues which needed addressing as to rental cost and poaching. Cllr. M-L Kellaway felt that there was a conflict between using the field for a wildflower meadow and as a field for horses.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs. N. Bedwell, B. Perry, J. Moore, and A-L. Regan.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Howard declared that his house neighboured the grazing field (see item 7).

Cllr. Aisladie declared she was the wife of the applicant for the Chief Commons Officer post (see item 24).

Cllr. Edwards declared she was part of the team undertaking the wildlife survey on the grazing field (see item 7).

3. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 3rd September 2024

These were **approved** and signed by the Chairman. Ms. Linegar asked for it to be noted that she did not recall the discussion at the last meeting that any work on the grazing field would lead to an increase in her rental. Cllr. Howard clarified his understanding that although there was a discussion on rental price it wasn't necessarily linked to the improvements proposed.

4. Matters arising from the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda

There were none.

5. Finance – to approve payments/receipts to date as per the cashbook circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting

These were **approved**.

6. To consider and agree terms for the renewal of the current tenancy on Cemetery Lodge or seeking new tenants

The Council's letting agents had recommended an increase in the letting fees by 22% in line with market rates. Cllr. Bedwell had visited the property with the Locum Clerk and considered it to be in good condition. He did note that the heating was running very hot and there didn't appear to be a thermostat. Following debate, **it was agreed** to authorise the letting agents to propose the rent increase they were recommending to the Tenant. In

the meantime the Locum Clerk should seek a second opinion and the matter should be delegated to the General Purposes Committee for a final decision. The Locum Clerk was asked to investigate if loft insulation was in place and whether a thermostat was needed. Cllr. Howard noted that an EPC needed doing. **Action: Locum Clerk**

7. To agree revised terms for the grazing licence on the Alleyn's Road allotment field

Following discussion in which questions were raised as to why there were problems now after so many years, whether the needs of Wild Cookham could be satisfied by focussing on the nature reserve and whether grazing had the same effect as mowing inter alia, it was **unanimously agreed** that the field was best used as a field for grazing horses and (with Cllr. Edwards objecting) by a **majority** of those present that the Council should invest in improving the facilities notably by providing water piped from the standpipe in the allotments, replacing unstable fencing, restocking some of the hedges and removing brambles. Cllr. Howard recommended that the General Purposes Committee consider at its meeting later in October the costs of implementing these improvements. He encouraged the Locum Clerk to try and get quotes by the next General Purposes meeting so as decisions could be made. Cllr. Howard recommended that given the outstanding issues, Ms. Linegar should be offered the Licence for 2024- 2025 on the same terms as before with one caveat being a reduction in the number of horses on the field from 4 to 3. **This was unanimously agreed.** She was asked to meet with Ms. Linegar to work through the issues raised in time for the following year's Licence renewal process.

Action: Locum Clerk and Cllr. Pleming

8. To consider and agree engaging SW Transport to provide advice on further objections and a response to a further consultation regarding the Cannondown Road development

Cllr. Pleming explained that the main issue was with the junction at the end of the High Street and the possibility of long queues. Recently an appeal over traffic congestion in the Gomme Valley had been successful and there were similarities with this application. SW Transport would be willing to prepare submissions at a cost of £300. Cllr. Edwards also noted that there had been a new traffic report and a series of minor amendments to the plans and she would wish SW Transport to comment on these too. Cllr. R. Kellaway felt the consultant had seemed unenthusiastic as to the chances of success.

It was agreed (with two abstentions) that SW Transport should be engaged to prepare submissions in accordance with the original quote of £300 and his reasonable costs of commenting on the new traffic report and plans. Cllr. Pleming asked Cllr. Howard to request from Nick Westlake a list of the changes if possible and he was asked to ask for an extension of time to comment too.

Cllr. Edwards wished to put in a comment at this stage to say none of the changes seemed to address our original concerns but Cllr. Howard advised her to do so only after having scrutinised the plans in detail. He added that the mix of affordable housing had changed.

Action: Locum Clerk and Cllr. Pleming

9. To consider and agree a response to Bisham Management Plan Consultation

Cllr. Edwards noted that the Woodlands Trust had prepared a plan for the next 50 years and that she would wish the Council to support it. **This was agreed** and she was asked to respond on behalf of the Council. Cllr. Howard asked her to draw to their attention problems with overhanging foliage on the Highway. **Action Cllr. Edwards**

10. To consider support for the request to re-route the Terry's Lane footpath

Following discussion, **it was agreed** that it would set a bad precedent for the Council to support re -routing of footpaths without strong evidence of problems nor having explored other solutions to such problems. It was noted that the security of the neighbouring property could be improved by improving the fencing around it.

11. To approve the supplier for a new website

Following debate on the four quotes received **it was agreed** that the contract be placed with Candoo at a cost of £2,450 plus if necessary a hosting package of £360 per annum.

Action: Locum Clerk

12. To consider the potential acquisition of land for the Sutton Road allotments

This was deferred until the next meeting.

13. To note correspondence relating to moorings at Bell Meadow

Cllr. Howard noted that the moorings were owned by RBWM and problems had arisen owing to boats over-wintering at Bell Rope Meadow and residents complaining about waste and parking issues. He was meeting with RBWM to try and resolve these issues.

Action: Cllr. Howard

14. To consider and agree terminating the HR support contract with Croner

This would be deferred to the next Staffing Committee meeting.

15. To receive an update on the Corporate Plan

No report had been received.

16. To receive an update from the Communications working party

No report had been received.

17. To receive a report from Cllr. Perry regarding the Neighbourhood Plan

17.1 Cllr. Perry had submitted a report. He noted that the Council had approved in June 2024 the then revised draft of the Plan and had also delegated to the working party the power to make any further minor amendments. The working party has now agreed the final amendments to the draft relating to green corridors and how they mesh with owners' rights within their own curtilages, the agricultural and equine briefs and certain other minor amendments.

17.2 AECOM informed the working party on 5th September that they had been told that funding for their further work had been agreed by the Government. They have therefore done that work, with advice from one of their built heritage specialists to make sure that they properly address RBWM's comments relating to the Historic England guidance. On 25th September they let the working party have the results and asked for comment within a week. The Working Party is therefore reviewing those and will respond by 1st October.

17.3 Once that is all complete, the draft will be ready for submission to RBWM for Regulation 16 consultation and Examination. It is therefore hoped that this will be done in October. In the light of the Council's previous decisions, it is not necessary to re-submit it for approval but a copy of the final version will be circulated at the same time.

Action: Cllr. Perry

18. To receive an update from the Traffic working party

Cllr. Howard was awaiting confirmation of the date for starting the no parking zone along Sutton Road.

19. Outside Bodies and Borough Cllr. reports

19.1 Cllr. Howard had met with the Public Rights of Way group at RBWM and new plans were in the process of being drawn up.

19.2 Cllr. Howard reported that financial scrutiny of past years accounting at RBWM had thrown up some very concerning issues.

20. Any other business (by permission of the Chairman and upon which no decisions may be made)

20.1 Cllrs. Edwards and Fleming had attended online training regarding ascertaining Local Housing Need and would discuss this further at the next planning meeting. Cllr. Howard noted that RBWM used pan- Berkshire statistics and having a local survey would be a good thing and it should link with the Housing Association to take forward.

20.2 It was noted that RBWM had clarified that any request for a call in of a planning application needed to be made within the *deadline originally given for consultation* regardless of any extension of time for the consultation granted by a planning officer. Cllr. Howard emphasised that whenever the Council had to request an extension of time then a request to call in should automatically be triggered - which could subsequently be rescinded if not necessary.

Action: Locum Clerk

20.3 Cllrs. Edwards and Howard had met with RBWM's Cllrs. Hill and Martin following on from concerns they had about the number of applications that Cookham Parish Council had called in. She felt that the meeting and subsequent Cookham 'Safari' had helped to clarify the issues in Cookham.

21. Under section 1(2) Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act 1960) and under Standing order 3d to agree that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted below that the public be temporarily excluded and be instructed to withdraw

This was agreed.

22. To receive a report regarding outstanding issues relating to the former Clerk leaving her employment

There was nothing to report. It was noted that the former Clerk had asked for a reference. It was **unanimously agreed** that in line with modern practice it should be the policy of the Council that references should just state dates of employment and positions held.

Action :Locum Clerk

23. To receive a report relating to the recruitment and selection of a new Clerk

The recruitment process was underway with a view to appointing a new Clerk by the end of October. The Locum Clerk was happy to undertake a handover of a week or more as needed and to be available on a retainer basis to help with queries if this is what the Council wished.

Action: Locum Clerk and Cllr. Aisladie

24. Update on employment of a new Chief Commons Officer

There was nothing to report. Cllr. Howard noted that there had been a change in the law to remove 'zero hour' contracts which will impact on this position.

Next meeting Tuesday 5th November 2024 at 7.30pm in the Community Room at Cookham Library.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Signed as a true record of the meeting

.....Chairman

Dated.....