

CHARNEY BASSETT PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30 PM ON WEDNESDAY 13 JULY 2011

Present:

Mr M Cox, Chairman
Mr D Nellist, Vice-chairman
Mr D Hughes
Mr J Harper

Dr S K Cowlam, Clerk

Eight members of the public were in attendance.

11/41 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

County Councillor Melinda Tilley, District Councillor Anthony Hayward, Parish Councillor Pamela Edwards, and Village College Manager Lynn Brookes had sent their apologies for absence. There were no declarations of interest.

11/42 To Approve the Minutes of the May Meeting, and Matters Arising

RESOLVED: the minutes of the May 2011 meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman. Matters arising from the May 2011 meeting were as follows.

- 11/25 RESOLVED now that the Clerk had enquired of the PC's insurer whether Councillor Edwards (who is suitably qualified) could carry out the annual inspection of the children's play area. The advice received is that she could not because of the potential conflict of interest. We shall continue with the planned RoSPA inspection, and pass responsibility for future organization and response to this to CHAFT, as previously agreed.
- 11/25 RESOLVED now that the Chairman had considered installation of a dog bag dispenser on Charney Field. His view was unchanged from previous consideration that the village should not subsidise the responsibilities of the small minority of dog owners who allow their dogs to foul the field. The other councillors agreed with this view.
- 11/25 Councillor Hughes had found an expert to access land ownership records in connection with riparian ownership along the River Ock. He has still to arrange for this expert to brief the Council, and hoped to do this for the September meeting. His work to identify riparian owners in the Charney Bassett area would be free of charge.

11/43 County Councillor's Matters

None reported.

11/44 District Councillor's Matters

None reported.

11/45 Clerk's Financial Report

The Clerk presented his financial report CBPC/FIN/11/04 (appended to minutes) which had been distributed to councillors. The figures represented the situation from the start of the 2011/12 financial year. The following details were noted.

- The PC had set up a PAYE scheme, as required by HMRC, to pay its employees. Accordingly, the Clerk's honorarium for 2010/11 had been paid and the income tax on this paid to HMRC.

- Hitherto, the internal auditor's fee had been paid a year in arrears. The fees reported here bring payment up to date to the end of 2010/11.
- Payments included £480 for tree work from the flood grant.

RESOLVED: the report was adopted.

11/46 Planning Matters

The Clerk reported as follows.

- Retrospective planning permission had been granted for a replacement double garage at Coral Oaks. The PC had objected to this on the grounds of its size and obtrusive location.
- Detailed modifications were being sought by the developer at Penny Chickens. The PC had no objection to this.
- Permission was being sought to replace a greenhouse at 14 Orchard Close. This is required because of the exposed location of the building. The PC had no objection.

11/47 Flooding/Project CHAFFINCH

The Chairman introduced this topic by describing briefly the work that had been done after the flood of July 2007, not only by the PC (through the Charney Army) but also by residents with riparian responsibilities and residents who had been flooded. He wished this part of the meeting to be interactive and invited members of the public present to contribute to the evening's discussion. His purpose was to progress the preparation of a flood plan noting that this needed to include the views of all residents and to culminate in a flood plan that has the full ownership of the residents. The points that he made are shown in a note by the Clerk appended to these minutes. The points that emerged during discussion were as follows.

- Are the road drains cleared frequently enough in Charney Wick? Main Street is often waterlogged here after rain. We feel that we should be on a maintenance rota.
- How often are ditches cleared? They seem to fill more at harvest time.
- We wish to understand better the local geography and how the watercourse network functions.
- A second culvert under Main Street from the Bridle Path to 1/2 Orchard Close seems to be a sound idea, though we need to know whether this would have a detrimental effect on downstream properties.
- Blockages need to be cleared from all watercourses, and the junction of the R Ock and Gainfield Brook needs investigation. We know of blockages between Charney Mill and Lyford Bridge.
- RESOLVED that the Clerk would progress all of the points above.
- Clarification of the above would inform a public meeting of the PC and residents to review and progress the project. It was RESOLVED that a public meeting would be arranged (by the Clerk) in the autumn.

11/48 Village College

Lynn Brookes had provided the following brief.

- Yoga and pilates classes are fully subscribed.
- The excellent patchwork and needlecraft exhibition in the village hall had been followed by two beginners' classes. These are proving a great success, and more are planned for the autumn, both beginners and intermediate.
- Lynn hopes to arrange digital photography and French conversation classes in the autumn.

Councillors congratulated Lynn on her hard work, evidenced by the varied and interesting programme of classes.

11/49 Clerk's Correspondence

The Clerk reported, as follows.

- A resident had suggested that we name Charney Field. The PC found this interesting, and noted that CHAFT should be consulted on this. If agreed, suggestions might be gleaned by a competition.

RESOLVED that Doug Hughes would take the suggestion to CHAFT for consideration.

- Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor PC had forwarded its parish plan to the Clerk. Also, the Chairman had obtained a copy of the Hanney Community plan.

RESOLVED that the PC would discuss this topic after reading the two plans.

- VWHDC had issued a timetable of training for town and parish councils in planning. This will be of interest to us in the light of emerging Government policy on localism.
- We are invited to respond to an OCC request for views on Wantage IAC's request for an increase in subsidy for its car scheme.

RESOLVED that the Clerk would respond after specialist views from Jim Harper.

- The Clerk had sent retirement wishes to Keith Lead (EA) on behalf of the PC and the Charney Army.
- The Clerk had asked EA to advise us of his successor, and to fulfil his outstanding actions.

11/50 Information Exchange

- Jim Harper asked that we encourage residents to help maintain a safe, tidy and pleasant village environment by undertaking weeding the road gutters and cutting back overhanging tree branches at their properties, and by setting the angle of automatic outside lights so that they do not inconvenience neighbours.

RESOLVED that the Clerk put a note in Charney Chatter to this effect.

- Mike Cox remarked how tidy and litter-free the village had been during and after the Charney Feast.
- Doug Hughes reported on the Feast. Provisional figures indicate that a net profit of about £1700 had been made. The PC congratulated Jane Fry, Mike Newman and the CHAFT organizers on the programme, layout and teams of workers who had worked so hard on the event.
- Mike Cox noted that NAG advises of a spate of thefts from cars of satellite navigation equipment. Advice is to keep it from view in unattended vehicles.
- RESOLVED that the Clerk should remind Thames Water to remove concrete rubble from the Denchworth Road following their work in the village.

11/51 Date of Next Meeting

14 September 2011, at 7:30 pm in the Village Hall.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:45pm.

Signed Date
Chairman

Briefing Note to Charney Bassett Parish Council on the Preparation of a Flood Action Plan

1. The purpose of this note is to provide a reminder to parish councillors of “the story so far” on responding to the flood of July 2007 in order to focus discussion on the next steps.
2. After the flood of July 2007 the EA and local authorities encouraged communities to take action to prepare flood plans and to undertake work to reduce flood risk to themselves. They emphasised riparian responsibilities and made it clear that they themselves would not take responsibility to undertake work (though this had been the case with their predecessor organisations). They would offer support and advice, and limited funding.
3. In the aftermath of the flooding, the PC held a meeting, attended by a number of residents, to discuss the topic, and at about that time formed project CHAFFINCH.
4. Shortly afterwards the PC invited residents to participate in walking the watercourses in and around the village in order to annotate and update a map. Twenty to thirty residents participated, and information was obtained from other residents.
5. The previous clerk was successful in obtaining a grant of £2,346 from VWHDC for flood group work. Some of this has been spent on tools and equipment and on specialist tree work along Charney Wick ditch beside the bridle path. £1,986 remains.
6. We have obtained advice on at least three occasions from visits by EA representatives.
7. The PC formed a flood working group (John Daghish, Colin McGuire, the Chairman, the Clerk).
8. Several of us have attended three flood workshops provided by EA/VWHDC/SODC.
9. Practical work has been undertaken by the Charney Army as follows:
 - Reinstating the weir near the split of Charney Wick Ditch from the Millstream,
 - Clearing the bank and overhanging trees along the Bridle Path,
 - Clearing weeds and other materials downstream of the bridge at Ock Green.
10. Riparian owners (mostly Messrs Brown/Godfrey/McGuire) have done work to clear the Mill stream, and the river Ock downstream of the Mill.
11. A recent suggestion to EA to install a second culvert under Main Street from the Bridle Path to 1 & 2 Orchard Close may be sensible. Building up the bank on the Charney Wick ditch on the Lindsay side is not.
12. So, where do we go from here? Below are my own views.
13. The PC is resolved to prepare a flood plan but four years after the flood, we are not much further on! There are two aspects to a plan. One: to detail actions following a flood. This seems to be fairly straightforward. Two: to identify practical work to be done to avoid or mitigate future flooding. This is not straightforward, because the PC does not have sufficient knowledge of the local geography and the water network, nor does it have the resource or authority to carry out such work.
14. The PC must not act alone in all of this, but must involve the community. Any plan that is produced needs to have input from residents, so that the whole community takes ownership of it.
15. Possible future actions could be as follows, though the list is not exhaustive.
 - Draw upon local knowledge and expertise,
 - call a meeting of interested residents to discuss flood avoidance measures,
 - learn more about the local geography and the water network,
 - try to obtain more information from EA about how the 2007 flood happened and the likelihood of a similar future event,
 - is there a simple model that can predict a flood event in the village?
 - Seek views from residents and EA/local authorities on what practical work can be undertaken to reduce flood risk.
16. The foregoing is intended to stimulate discussion by the PC.

Stephen Cowlam,
Clerk to the PC.

11 July 2011.

