

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

HELD AT 7.30 PM ON 25 January 2024

At the Memorial Hall, Finchampstead RG40 4JU

PRESENT: Councillor S. Weeks; Chair
Councillors E. Allen; S. Bowers; S. Bromley; D. Cornish; R. Cundy; G. Evans;
P. Grainger; A. Grimshaw; S. Gurney; G. Jukes OBE; S. McDonald; C.
Mortimer; R. Woof & G. Veitch.

316/2024 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs B. Eytley; R. Marshallsay

317/2024 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Non-pecuniary declarations of interest were received as follows:

Cllr Bromley: California Ratepayers Association.

Cllr Cundy: California Ratepayers Association.

Cllr Weeks: MS Therapy Centre.

Cllr Grainger: California Ratepayers Association.

318/2024 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30 November 2023 were agreed as a true and correct record.

319/2024 CHAIRS REPORT

Cllr Weeks reported on current matters.

- The recruitment for the new Clerk and RFO is underway, interviews will start next week.
- The death of Walter (Wally) Chapman was noted, his funeral is on the 9th of February at St James' Church. Wally was previously one of Finchampstead's longest serving Parish Councillors giving 51 years' service to the community.
- 10 years ago, WBC and the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association (WDVTA) planted 60 English Oak trees to celebrate the Queens Diamond Jubilee. 5 of these were planted in Finchampstead, 4 in Burnmoor Meadow and 1 at St James' Church. A report has been received from WBC Jubilee trees co-ordinator showing that 56 of the original trees are still alive. The report thanks Finchampstead Parish for labelling the trees, planting additional trees and to Cllr Veitch for his support with this project.
- The Chairman is attending the opening ceremony of the new KS2 play equipment the Parish helped to fund at Nine Mile Ride primary school.
- The annual Litter Pick is being held on Sunday the 24th of March.

320/2024 PROJECT AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Gorse Ride regeneration

Cllr Bowers reported on the current position.

- Planning and construction is on target.
- The plan is for residents to start moving into the next phase of properties in May.
- There is a large crane up currently and Neil Jones who is leading the project at WBC thanked residents for keeping the area clear whilst it was brought onto site.
- There are plans to get the residents association meetings back on track this year.

- Wates are organising an air fryer cooking course for residents where they will be giving away a couple of appliances.

Arborfield Strategic Development Location (Arborfield Green and Finchwood Park)

- A meeting is scheduled for next week, Cllr Evans is planning to attend.

321/2024 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT BUDGET AND PRECEPT DEMAND

The draft budget was circulated to all Councillors.

Cllr Woof advised that the Finance & General Management Committee is recommending a net budget of £222,236 and a precept of £197,919. This is a 3% increase on last year's precept.

A precept of £192,154 will mean that the annual Council Tax payable to the Parish Council by a Band D property would be £29.77 an increase of 45p from last year.

The draft budget for 2024/25 of £222,236 and a precept of £197.919 was agreed by the Council.

322/2024 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The following items were agreed by the Council.

Grants

- Me2Club £750
- The Wokingham Volunteer Centre £1,500
- Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre £1,000

Community Infrastructure Levy expenditure

- St James Church – A grant of £12,000 was approved for the refurbishment of the kitchen and disabled toilet in the Manor House Church centre. Cllr Mortimer abstained from the vote.
- California Association – An award of up to £600 for an overhead projector was approved.
- Allotment Maintenance and Enhancements – A grant of £21,000 was approved for the project which is being jointly funded with WBC.

323/2024 COMMITTEE REPORTS

FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Cllr Woof reported on the financial position of the Council and current matters.

The committee met on the 09/01. The minutes of the meeting have been circulated.

Financial position

- Unity Trust Bank £602,990.11
- CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund Account £1,832,866.65
- CCLA Property Fund £25,000
- The above figures include £2,195,569 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts from 2023/24.

The schedule of payments totalling £42,238.03 was circulated to all Councillors and payments were unanimously approved. Cllrs Jukes and Woof agreed to authorise the electronic payments.

- The purchase of a single licence for Canva communication design software was approved.
- The website support will be increased by 1 hour per month.
- The interim audit took place earlier this month and the report has been completed which didn't highlight any areas of concern.

AMENITIES COMMITTEE

Cllr McDonald reported on current matters.

The next Meeting is scheduled for the 7th of February.

California and Lakeside improvement project

WBC have cancelled several project team meetings last autumn due to the long-term absence of the project manager Devi Lingham.

Andy Glencross of WBC confirmed it was likely to be spring 2024 before this project would now be taken forward. This is disappointing as it will potentially impact on the schedule of works and delay the delivery of the project.

FBC play area and lottery bid

Cllr McDonald and the Deputy Clerk met Ricky Josie of WBC on the 19th of December.

Unfortunately, FBC representatives did not attend. It was a positive meeting with regard to plans for the play area refurbishment which has been outlined in principle. FBC are currently discussing changes to the car park. We will need to coordinate or avoid works while this is happening. Ricky Josie gave an update on the 23rd of January and has said once he has full plans of action he will ask for designs and full quotes and try and arrange for the lottery team to visit the site.

The Jones Trophy

If it is confirmed that the Finchhampstead Society has closed, the award of the Jones VC trophy will now be co-ordinated by FPC and discussed at the next Amenities meeting on the 7th of February. It is too late to make an award at our annual gathering this year.

D.DAY 80 June 2024

Sylvia has confirmed to the church that the Parish Council will support with marketing the event and with a donation towards catering costs. St James' Church have not as yet contacted the parish council with details of the event.

Allotments

Gordon Veitch has successfully arranged a joint funding agreement with WBC for the Finchhampstead allotment enhancements.

The new gates for the allotments are now in place.

The Finchwood Park Allotments site is being reviewed.

Defibrillators

Pauline has carried out an extremely comprehensive review of our defibrillators and we now have an updated record of serial numbers, battery expiry dates, and warranty expiry dates. The parish council contact details on "the Circuit" have been updated.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Cllr Cundy reported on current matters.

- The Planning Committee have met twice since the last main council – on 12 December and 17 January. Approved minutes for the December meeting have been circulated and published, and draft minutes for January's meeting were circulated on Friday 19 January.
- 19 applications were considered, of which 5 were objected to. Notable ones were as follows:
 - Revised proposals for the Blagrove Lane Development for 350 dwellings. The Committee have re-iterated their previous objections. (Adjoining Parish)
 - Plans for Sainsbury's at Arborfield Green. No objections were raised. (Adjoining Parish)

- Land at the rear of 6 Johnson Drive for 8 dwellings. This is an increase of 3 from the original application which has attracted many objections from residents, including ourselves.
 - Revised proposals for the Sports & Community Centre at Arborfield Green. The Committee welcome the improved sports & leisure facilities but have raised some concerns with parking and have highlighted a few other areas for consideration, along with a recommendation that the developer works more closely with the local community to achieve the best solution regarding the pavilion. (Adjoining Parish)
 - Notification of a new premises licence application for 'Elusive Brewing' at Hogwood Industrial Estate.
- 20 WBC decisions were noted and all but 4 were in line with our comments. Decisions included refusal for a detached dwelling and outbuilding following demolition of the existing property at 206 Nine Mile Ride. This was listed at The Borough's Planning Committee meeting on 13 December and Cllrs Marshallsay & Grainger both spoke against the application. Among the reasons for refusal, WBC included overdevelopment of the plot contrary D1 and D3 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan.
 - 1 Appeal was noted from Pye Hill House, Jubilee Road. Proposals were for the erection of a detached outbuilding/garden store and workshop. The Committee didn't object.
 - There were no new TPO's, but 5 applications for works to protected trees were received – 2 of these involved felling and both were objected to by our TPO Sub-committee. One of these was to fell trees of mixed species in woodland at Land east of Monterey, Roman Ride which several residents also objected to.
 - The Parish have been asked to suggest names for the Sheerlands Road development at Hogwood Farm for 6 roads and 10 blocks of flats. A 'trees' naming theme was a popular choice and our suggestions for this will be put forward to WBC in due course.
The next committee meeting is on 21st February.

RIGHTS OF WAY COMMITTEE

Cllr Jukes reported on current matters.

The committee met on the 6th December.

- Cllr Jukes stepped down as Vice Chair due to other commitments and Cllr Mortimer took over the role.
- Draft minutes have been written and the project list updated.
- Cllrs Allen and Woof will be joining the Cemex working group.
- The proposal to open the use of some footpaths as bridleways needs to be discussed with the proposer. Cllr Veitch to join the working group.
- A meeting is to be organised with Andy Glencross at WBC to discuss the projects, Cllr Cornish to organise.
- Decisions need to be made by the committee on the priority of projects.
- A meeting will be organised with John Alexander, footpath warden to discuss maintenance actions.

ROADS & ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Cllr Bromley reported on current matters.

- No Roads meeting since the last main Council.
- Community Speed Watch: -
 - Sessions will resume on 5th February after a winter recess in December and January.

- Cllr Weeks has stepped down as a Co-ordinator but will continue to be a participant. Sessions will run sessions every other week until we can find another Co-ordinator.
- We have a new CSW volunteer, Rachel Burden who is yet to complete the training.
- PSIDs continue to be deployed but future locations will be influenced by the work at the Crossroads.
- Parking at the California Crossroads – No further update.
- California Crossroads improvement scheme will start in earnest on 12th February. It will be run in 3 phases: -
 - Phase 1: 12/02/2024 to 30/04/2024
 - Phase 1: 30/04/2024 to 04/07/2024
 - Phase 1: 04/07/2024 to 10/09/2024
- There will be regular newsletters and leaflet drops describing each phase in more detail.
- War Memorial junction: -
 - WBC received the results of the Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and cores & CBR surveys at the end of November 2023. Following this, they completed the concept design.
 - The next step is to commission a Road Safety Audit (RSA) Stage 1, to obtain insight into the feasibility of the design from the road safety point of view.
 - The high-level programme for the completion of design is RSA 1 – by mid-Feb, then detailed design pack + specifications: by mid-March.
 - A meeting will be arranged when they are done and hopefully get final costing for us to deal with.
- Pedestrian Crossing at Biggs Lane going into Hazebrouck Meadows (Barkham PC project): -
 - Developer to undertake works to rectify the Gradient and lower the BT cover, but currently do not have funds available to meet these obligations.
 - We are told by WBC the design and construction of a signal Pedestrian Crossing with Lighting is estimated to cost £120K. This sits 18th on the Council's list of assessed crossings and they only have funding for 2 or 3 a year. Its therefore unlikely to be funded by WBC.
 - Cllr Mortimer has asked WBC to provide an alternative estimate for a cheaper non signal raised crossing with lighting.
 - The Developer is only obligated to provide a crossing in the vicinity of Oak Drive (which is unlikely to be delivered before Sept 2024), so any crossing further south will need to be funded separately.
 - TVP police have confirmed that the 'National Speed Limit' sign can be moved back to the other side of Commonfield Lane junction, and a TRO process is expected to commence this month.

324/2024 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

BALC

Cllr Cundy reported that:

- There was an executive meeting with the new executive members who have taken on new duties.

- There will be an increased cost to HALC members of £3,500.
- Cllr Gurney asked Cllrs to identify training needs and courses they may be interested in and send her the details.

Finchampstead Park Management Committee

- There was a meeting on the 16th of January.
- The ongoing issue with the car dealer parking vehicles in the car park should be resolved at the end of the month when the dealership is moving.

Councillor Forum

Cllr Veitch showed Councillors the proposed memorial tree and sign for the late Parish Clerk, Katy Dagnall.

The annual gathering will be taking place at the FBC centre on the 6th of March.

Cllr Weeks thanked Cllr Grainger for all her efforts in producing the special California Crossroads newsletter. This will be circulated in the next 2 weeks.

325/2024 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 28 February 2024.

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting of the Council.

DECEMBER PAYMENT LIST

UNITY TRUST BANK ACCOUNT 10/12/23			£630,343.75
CCLA DEPOSIT ACCOUNT 30/11/23			£1,824,972.15
CCLA PROPERTY FUND 31/08/23			£25,000.00
INCLUDING CIL RECEIPTS TOTAL £2,286,743			
TOTAL FUNDS			£ 2,480,315.90
Outstanding payments not yet cleared			
Total payments outstanding			0.00
Payments already approved and paid			
Jack Peachey	67.50	0.00	67.50
TOTAL APPROVED AND PAID	67.50	0.00	67.50
PAYMENTS DECEMBER 2023			
Staff costs			
Total staff costs	4065.61	0	4065.61
Other costs			
MICROSHADE	119.37	23.87	143.24
BT - PHONE AND INTERNET	57.88	11.57	69.45
IBS - PRINTER USE	6.5	1.3	7.8
FBC CAFÉ	24.17	4.84	29.01
FBC YOUTH WORK	3000	0	3000
CHAIRMAN EXPENSES - FLOWERS	90	0	90
RICE ASSOCIATES - PAYROLL OCT-DEC	412	82.4	494.4
SSE - LAMP COLUMNS	80.91	5.54	86.45
Allotment costs			
FISHER GERMAN - LONGWATER LANE ANNUAL RENT	1000	0	1000
Grants and contributions - subject to final approval by Council where required			
TOTAL DECEMBER PAYMENTS			£ 8,985.96
TOTAL REMAINING			£ 2,471,329.94

DECEMBER PETTY CASH / CARD PAYMENTS			
CARD PAYMENT CLERK	131.35	26.27	157.62
TOTAL CARD PAYMENTS (FOOTPATH WARDEN)			
TOTAL	131.35	26.27	157.62
CARD PAYMENTS DETAIL			
QR CODE GENERATOR	131.35	26.27	157.62

JANUARY PAYMENTS LIST

UNITY TRUST BANK ACCOUNT 10/01/24			£602,990.11
CCLA DEPOSIT ACCOUNT 31/12/23			£1,832,866.65
CCLA PROPERTY FUND 31/08/23			£25,000.00
INCLUDING CIL RECEIPTS TOTAL £2,195,569.32			
TOTAL FUNDS			£ 2,460,856.76
Outstanding payments not yet cleared			
Total payments outstanding			0.00
Payments already approved and paid			
WEB MARKETING MATTERS - OLD INVOICE	157.55	31.51	189.06
WOKINGHAM PAPER - JOB ADVERT	600	120	720.00
INSURANCE - ADDITIONAL COST NOT ON SEPT SCHEDULE	614.74	0	614.74
TOTAL APPROVED AND PAID	1372.29	151.51	1523.80
STAFF COSTS			
Total staff costs	3964.41	0	3964.41
OTHER COSTS			
MICROSHADE	119.37	23.87	143.24
WEB MARKETING MATTERS	157.55	31.51	189.06
ASAP COMPUTER SERVICES	278.9	55.78	334.68
EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL - FINANCE ADMIN	254.85	50.97	305.82
FBC CAFÉ CHARGES	24.75	4.95	29.7
SLCC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL KATE	183	0	183
BT - PHONE AND INTERNET	72.47	14.49	86.96
SSE - LAMP COLUMNS	78.3	5.36	83.66
PEACH TREE GARDENING - MEMORIAL PARK	67.5	0	67.5
ALLOTMENT COSTS			
Grants and contributions - subject to final approval by Council where required			
ME2CLUB	750	0	750
THE WOKINGHAM VOLUNTEER CENTRE	1500	0	1500
BERKSHIRE MS THERAPY CENTRE	1000	0	1000
ST JAMES CHURCH	12000	0	12000
CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION	600	0	600
FINCHAMPSTEAD ALLOTMENTS	21000	0	21000

TOTAL JANUARY PAYMENTS			£ 42,238.03
TOTAL REMAINING			£ 2,418,618.73
JANUARY PETTY CASH / CARD PAYMENTS			
CARD PAYMENT CLERK			
TOTAL CARD PAYMENTS (FOOTPATH WARDEN)			
TOTAL			
CARD PAYMENTS DETAIL			