**Crawley Parish Council**

**Minutes of meeting held at 7.30pm on 25th January 2023 at The Lamb**

Present: Cllrs Colin Dingwall (Chair), Graham Howkins, Mark McCappin, Tony Connell; Sheena Derry (Secretary); Lewis Ross (parishioner); William Waring and Keith Jameson (WFMG, by invitation).

1. Apologies: Cllr Heather Northam, Sue Bremner-Milne (Treasurer), Gill Hill (WODC).

2. The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2022 were approved.

3. Declarations of interest: None.

4. Witney Flood Mitigation Group.

William Waring and Keith Jameson from Witney Flood Mitigation Group (WFMG) gave some background to the formation of the group, its aims, and the expertise they each bring. They are already working well with WODC and the Environment Agency (EA). A joint meeting with Thames Water, OCC (Lead Local Flood Authority), WFMG, and the EA discussed a report on the December 2020 flooding in Witney and identified a number of things that should be done to alleviate risk. There is a need to push for action on these issues. WFMG are pressing for better maintenance as a first step. This would involve riparian owners fulfilling their statutory duties. The EA should write to these owners but are reluctant to use their resources on this as they have no powers of enforcement. WODC and Witney TC are the biggest riparian owners in the Witney area. A more engineered solution to hold more water back in the floodplain above Witney would require updated modelling of the riverbed and floodplain, and potentially involve construction of the proposed West End Link (road crossing between Hailey Road and Mill Street/Burford Road) and upstream attenuation ponds. It is unclear who would pay for this modelling, and it is unlikely that any big scheme could be delivered in the next 10 years.

It was agreed that a coordinated effort is generally more effective, and Crawley PC is happy to help where it can. As a first step we should help to identify riparian owners upstream of Witney and write to them reminding them of their statutory duties. WFMG will send MM a copy of the draft letter that they prepared with the EA for this purpose, but that the EA had decided not to issue.

5. Matters Arising:

* The yew trees in the churchyard at the top of Farm Lane were cut back on Tuesday 22nd January.
* MM has been in touch with Thames Water. The sewer repair has now been approved and they hope it will be done in May 2023. In the meantime, tankers have started pumping and will continue as necessary.

6. District Councillor’s Report. CD reported that WODC have a £140K deficit in their budget, in part because of additional staff costs. There are many different schemes to help with the cost of living crisis, which is confusing for residents needing help.

7. County Councillor’s Report. LW confirmed that Crawley village is on the list of villages to get a 20mph speed limit, in Phase 3 (delivery summer 24-summer 25).
[SD note: Crawley does not appear in Phase 3 on OCC’s website.]

8. Treasurer’s Report: Sue Bremner-Milne.

* The 3rd quarter report was circulated before the meeting. On 1st January, there was £2,204.69 in the Current Account, £542.47 in the Deposit Account, and £361.72 in the Defibrillator Maintenance Account.
* At present we owe HMRC £70.72 due to an error in including public liability insurance in the first claim. No further claim for VAT will be made until we are in credit again.
* The total for grass cutting was slightly higher than expected, but within the budget for next year.

9. Testing for pollution in the river Windrush. MM reported that he and SD had met with Debbie Campbell and Annie Jenkin from the Cotswold Rivers Trust (CRT) to see if we can organise regular testing for pollution in the river Windrush as it flows through Crawley. If we can get four volunteers, each would need to test once every two months. We hope that other villages along the Windrush will also become more involved. Training will be provided. At present, a limited amount of sampling is carried out, mainly by Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP) and the aim is to get a more comprehensive set of data to determine the scale of the problem. This would contribute to work by CRT and support WASP.

* CRT will be leading the Windrush Catchment Partnership to coordinate actions that will restore the environment along the river.
* WASP is a leading action group putting pressure on water companies to stop discharging untreated sewage into the Windrush and other rivers.

The PC agreed that this was a worthwhile initiative. SD to circulate the village to ask for volunteers. SD and MM to follow up possibility of testing equipment and chemicals being supplied by WASP.

10. Future Dates.

22nd March 2023 – PC Meeting

4th May 2023 – Elections

6th May 2023 – Coronation (Bank Holiday 8th May)

17th May 2023 – Annual PC Meeting and AGM

26th July 2023 – PC Meeting

27th September 2023 – PC Meeting

22nd November 2023 – PC Meeting

11. AOB.

* CD reported that a motion has been put to Council, which will go to Scrutiny in February, to put a clause in the local plan mandating that a “swift brick” is used in all new housing and extensions. This follows an initiative from Hannah Bourne-Taylor to raise awareness of a 50% decline in the swift population in the UK and to provide more nesting sites.
* OCC have secured funding to plant a tree in every parish and we now know that Crawley’s tree with be an Accolade cherry. It should be planted before the end of March.
* The sign near the war memorial advertising a hot food van at Crawley Mill has been reported on Fix My Street, and MM has further chased it up at the Council offices in Oxford. Such signs need permission, which we don’t believe has been obtained.
* SD has been asked if it would be possible to reduce the grass cutting in the churchyard in the summer months to encourage butterflies. Roger Newman (West Oxfordshire Field Club, Wychwood Forest Trust) coordinated surveying many churchyards last summer and plans to do more this year. Leaving the grass long around the margins and cutting a little higher between gravestones can make a big difference. SD to talk to Mr Franklin, who cuts our grass, to see what might be done while keeping the area tidy.
* SD was contacted by a resident of Delly End asking if we had any information about a planning application at Breach Farm. We do not, and WODC does not have any record either. CD will make further enquiries.