**Crawley Parish Council**

**Minutes of meeting held at 7.30pm on 26th July 2023 at The Lamb**

Present: Cllrs Heather Northam (Chair), Colin Dingwall, Mark McCappin, Tony Connell, Graham Howkins; Sheena Derry (Secretary); Sue Bremner-Milne (Treasurer); Lewis Ross (parishioner).

1. Apologies: Liam Walker

2. The Minutes of the meetings held on 22nd March, 19th April, and 17th May 2023 were approved.

3. Declarations of interest: None.

4. Matters Arising: None

5. Parishioners’ Matters

* HN reported that Frank Thompson had raised a query about the Minutes of the EGM on 19th April. He was offered an amendment but did not respond.
* SB-M reported that OCC had cut back the trees on Steep Hill out of season (there were birds nesting at the time). The matter has been reported.
* A parishioner reported to TC that, following the heavy rain we had on 10th June, the bund across Crawley Inn car park was redirecting a large percentage of the water coming down Foxburrow Lane and sending it into the centre of the village. A video showed that this was not the case, and the parishioner accepted this evidence.

6. District Council Report. (CD)

* CD reported a sink hole on Dry Lane to Fix My Street. This has been marked as a Category 1 defect by OCC and made safe by coning off the area, pending repair.
* WODC has refused a speculative planning application for 134 new houses without additional services at Minster Lovell, opposite The Horse and Radish. The village already suffers from low water pressure and sewage problems.
* There have been two new applications to WODC for solar farms, at Ramsden (25MW) and New Yatt/Poffley End (35 MW). Farmers can get up to £1,000 per acre/yr for renting a field to a solar farm – this is four times the agricultural return.
* WODC has agreed a working party for a new local plan, and Cottsway Housing Association will be involved with the provision of social housing. There is national pressure to get a change of wording in planning applications from a requirement for “affordable housing” (80% of market rate) to “social housing” (60% of market rate). WODC are also investigating whether they can identify suitable locations for development themselves, rather than asking land owners to put forward their land via agents, thereby cutting out the middle man and reducing costs.

7. County Council Report: No County Councillor attended the meeting.

8. Treasurer’s Report: SB-M had circulated the accounts before the meeting and there were no concerns.

* We have approximately £2,394 in the current account, £545 in the deposit account, and £364 in the defibrillator fund. SB-M has changed the reports slightly so that expenditure is now shown net of reclaimable VAT, making clear the actual cost to the Parish Council.
* The grass cutting grant of £351.16 from OCC has been received again this year.
* SB-M requested the authority of the Parish Council to add Heather Northam as a bank signatory for the accounts, and to remove Colin Dingwall as a signatory. Both parties were in agreement with this change and the request was authorised. SB-M offered her thanks to Colin for his support during a number of procedural changes to the financial management over the last couple of years.

9. Witney North and Witney East housing proposals and West End Link Road.

There are plans for significant new housing developments to the north and east of Witney. If either or both go ahead, there is concern that without a new river crossing the pressure on Crawley, with drivers increasingly using the village to bypass Witney, will get worse.

MM has drafted a letter to use either when a planning application comes in, or as a basis to pre-empt applications and express concern. This draft was accepted and will be used as the basis for Crawley PC’s response to any planning application that is submitted. In addition it was decided that MM and HN will draft a new pre-emptive report to send to WODC (Phil Shaw and Chris Hargraves) to register Crawley’s objection to any further housing developments without the inclusion of the West End Link.

10. Air Quality. HN and MM completed a survey on air quality on Bridge Street, which is designated as an Air Pollution Area (where pollution exceeds the national legal limit for NO2 of 40 µg/m3). WODC have put forward many potential actions, many of which are “soft”. Responders to the questionnaire were asked to nominate the two most and the two least effective actions. MM commented that getting below 40 µg/m3 is only a first step and that efforts must continue to drive the pollution to much lower levels.

11. Botley West Solar Farm. SD reported that the developer has now published their Scoping Report. WODC were asked to review the plans from a technical perspective and have responded, providing feedback on “a number of areas where they think the developer needs to do more”. The next step is for the developer to show their detailed proposals, which will go to public consultation in the autumn.

11. Pollution Testing. A small team of villagers have been testing the water quality at a number of sites on the Windrush since April. The testing has been guided by officers from Cotswold Rivers Trust who gave an undertaking to provide training, testing equipment, and sampling reagents. The village team held a meeting on 5th July to discuss how things were going. Many questions were raised around what the results mean, what happens to the data, how it fits into the bigger picture, and who will pay for the testing reagents. Unfortunately, nobody from the Cotswold Rivers Trust was able to attend, but a meeting with them will be arranged in early August. It was decided to continue until the end of the year before reviewing the sampling regimen.
In the absence of a promised supply of reagents, some of the team have bought materials at their own expense. CD commented that individuals should not be out of pocket. It was agreed that the PC would reimburse these individuals while efforts continue to get Cotswold Rivers Trust to honour their commitment to support the testing costs.

12. Future Dates

27th September 2023 – PC Meeting

5th November – Bonfire Night

22nd November 2023 – PC Meeting

24th January 2024 – PC Meeting

27th March 2024 – PC Meeting

13. AOB

* The sewers have been relined. The On-Site engineer said they have identified a steady flow of 4-5L/min of clear water coming in through private laterals between the war memorial and Showel Brook culvert. Dave Stickland from Thames Water has said they will investigate further.
* Guardrail on Dry Lane. This has now been classified as a “Structure” and passed back to OCC. There was no further information at the meeting. [see note below]
* Churchyard. SD has been trying to get WODC to engage in a plan to improve the biodiversity of the churchyard on Farm Lane. Despite encouragement at a meeting in March, they have not responded in any way to subsequent emails. SD will write to CD as District Councillor to complain.
* HN asked all councillors to look at the website before the next meeting to identify areas where improvements could be made. HN offered to liaise with James Walker to achieve changes.
* It is understood the land opposite Crawley Mill has been sold and it is unclear what the plans for the land are. Fencing and a bund have been installed and there is a large area of hardcore. HN will try to speak to the new owners informally.

Note: Damaged pedestrian guardrail. MM received a reply from OCC Senior Structures Engineer on the day after the PC meeting. OCC regret that there is no available design resource. Some resource may be available after six months. PC members were advised of this disappointing response. It was agreed that MM should escalate this matter to Liam Walker to ask if he could help. This action has been taken and the outcome will be reported at the next PC meeting.