

FRESHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Freshford Parish Council 9 October 2023, 7pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall

Parish Councillors Present: Julian Carpenter (Chairman), Elli Bate, Jennifer Clamp, Jessie Forbes, John Putt, Richard Tibbles

Apologies: John Adler

In attendance: Selina Jobson (Parish Clerk), Ward Councillor Fiona Gourley

Members of the Public: Three

70. **Declarations of Interests and Requests for Dispensations**

None.

71. **Minutes of Meeting**

Resolved: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2023 as a true record.

72. **Open Forum**

A resident involved with the trial of maintenance at the Cemetery spoke in support of continuing the trialled maintenance regime.

A resident spoke on several matters:

- that, in light of some complaints in other local areas about the quality of Truespeed installation work, checks should be made when installation works were undertaken by Truespeed in Freshford. The Clerk reported that the Truespeed works due to start in Freshford in November had been postponed, with no revised starting date as yet.

- that parking in New Road had increased and that more lorries were now using New Road. Dark Lane was increasingly used as a way of avoiding New Road, creating particular problems when vehicles travelling in opposite directions met in this very narrow lane.

- that he supported switching all street lights to LEDs, but objected to the switching off of 25 street lights. He stated that the criteria used in deciding which lights to switch off did not take account of footfall in the evenings, identifying the station approach as a busy area. Residents' perception of safety was an issue. He felt more financial data was needed before a decision could be made. He supported the removal of a small number of street lights and the conversion of remaining lights to LEDs.

73. **Natural Environment**

73.1 Trial of changes to the maintenance regime at the Cemetery

Councillors received a proposed schedule of grounds maintenance at the Cemetery, in light of a trial undertaken since June 2023. The trial involved volunteers managing some areas of grass and hand weeding unwanted vegetation. Details of the raking of long grass would be confirmed. A careful and sensitive approach would be taken to the clearing of any older, neglected graves. Details about the approach being undertaken and updates on species counts and biodiversity would be shared with the community. It was suggested that a noticeboard in the Cemetery might be useful, including contact details of the Parish Council. Contractor James Lock was thanked for working with the Parish Council and volunteers in implementing the changes.

Resolved: to adopt the Cemetery maintenance schedule as set out in the report.

73.2 Grass cutting of The Tynning

HL Mills had been asked to cut the long grass on The Tynning. Having checked with other contractors in previous years, no-one was able to pick up the long grass on The Tynning, so the grass would be cut and dropped.

74. **Co-option of Councillor**

No applications had been received for co-option, and two vacancies remained. The vacancies were being advertised in the forthcoming Newsletter and other ways of promoting the role would be considered.

75. **Planning Applications**

PL/2023/07518 Avonpark Retirement Village, Winsley Hill, BA2 7FF: Demolition of existing buildings (comprising 85 Care bedrooms), and proposed partial redevelopment and erection of new buildings to provide 71 Extra Care units and associated communal facilities (Use Class C2), parking and landscaping.

Buildings at Avonpark Retirement Village were visible from Freshford. The proposed building was two storeys higher than the current building. The application included documents demonstrating the visual impact and light spill from the proposed redevelopment. Councillors felt that they should submit a comment about the proposal because of its potential visual and light impact on Freshford.

Resolved: To comment that, given Avonpark Retirement Village's prominent position on the skyline and its visibility from Freshford, councillors were concerned about the visual impact of the proposed taller building & the impact of light from the site across the valley.

76. **Tree Applications**

23/03621/TCA The Glen, Rosemary Lane, BA2 7UD: Fell dead Holly tree.

Resolved: no objection to the application, but it was requested that the applicant should plant at least two trees to replace the tree being felled.

An additional tree application had been received since the agenda had been circulated:

23/03714/TCA 9 Upper Mount Pleasant, BA2 7UG: T1 Weeping Silver Birch reduce by roughly 30% (1.5-2m) due to excessive shading and to maintain the tree's amenity value.

Unless any councillor raised a concern with this application, 'No objection' would be submitted by the consultation deadline.

77. **Highways and Transport**

77.1 Number 94 bus service

Cllr Gourley reported that over 1100 people had signed a cross-party petition to restore local buses and some Freshford residents had attended an organised demonstration about local bus services held ahead of a West of England Combined Authority (WECA) meeting. A cross-party request for surplus funding from the birthday bus scheme to be re-allocated to local buses had been turned down by WECA.

In discussions between WECA and Wiltshire Council the 94 bus service had been recognised as good value for money. Wiltshire Council had only guaranteed to continue fully funding the service until the end of the year.

It was reported that usage of the 94 bus service had increased at peak times, but not during the daytime over the past few years. It was suggested that a 'Use it or Lose It' campaign could encourage increased bus use, with a focus on those who might use the bus during the day. Notices and leaflets in The Galleries café were proposed.

Although there were problems with the Westlink Demand Responsive Transport system, Cllr Gourley encouraged people to try using the service.

77.2 Freshford School meeting about parking

Cllr Carpenter had attended a meeting with the Head of Freshford Primary School, a School Governor, B&NES Senior Traffic Engineer, B&NES School Travel Plan Officer, a member of B&NES Road Safety Team and a resident to discuss issues around school parking and traffic. A number of ideas to improve the situation would be explored, including the possibility of trialling a 'school streets' initiative, which would involve shutting streets around the School at drop-off and pick-up times. It was not clear that the School's location would meet the criteria for such a scheme and access for residents and

emergency vehicles would be maintained. The ultimate objective was to provide solutions to current problems that would enable more sustainable transport patterns.

As a first step, a statement to identify the current problems with parking and traffic would be produced between the School, residents and the Parish Council.

77.3 Other updates

A residents survey about possible yellow lines around the bridge area in Freshford was being produced.

78. **Street Lighting**

78.1 Trial to turn off some street lamps

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Councillors considered quotes for:

- changing all sodium street lamps to LEDs (30 street lamps).
- conducting a trial of switching off 25 lights and converting the remaining sodium street lamps to LED (11 of 13 lights remaining on would need converting).
- decommissioning of 25 lights and fixtures, should the outcome of the trial be to switch off the street lamps involved.
- switching lights back on and converting those that were sodium lights to LEDs, should the outcome of the trial be to keep all lights on.

In discussion it was noted that:

- The Parish Council's commitment to climate & nature emergencies should be a major consideration in this project, aimed at reducing carbon emissions and light pollution.
- The project should lead to savings in the long-term, although it was not possible to estimate savings precisely, given difficulties with predicting electricity supply prices in the longer term.
- The Parish Council had decided to undertake a trial of switching off 25 lights during the winter and to then consult residents on whether to switch off some or all of these lights.
- When considering switching off any lights, a key consideration was residents' perception of safety.
- Whatever the outcome of the trial, the Parish Council was committed to converting all of the lights that were being kept on in the village to LEDs.
- The two quotes for decommissioning 25 lights (approximately £19,500 & £36,000) indicated that there were significant costs involved, should the outcome of the trial be to switch off some or all of the lights. Concerns were raised that the level of predicted costs would make switching off the lights unviable and that these costs should be considered when making a final decision on undertaking a trial switch off. It was acknowledged that costs and potential savings would need careful consideration. It was suggested that the decommissioning of lights and fixtures could be undertaken over a number of years to spread these costs.
- It was proposed that all the lights remaining on during the trial should be converted to LEDs (11 out of 13 lights would need converting) as part of the trial to provide an accurate picture of light levels in the village.
- Two of the quoted figures for converting lights to LEDs were estimates based on quotes provided by the company for other elements of the project. Actual figures would be required for a decision to be made.
- It was noted that if a decision on a trial was not taken soon then it would not be possible to run a trial in early 2024.

Resolved: to request quotes for the following specific elements from both companies:

- Upgrading 11 lights to LEDs
- Switching off 25 lights
- Switching back on 25 lights (should that be the outcome of the trial)

Once quotes were received an additional Parish Council meeting would be called, if necessary, to review the quotes and to make a decision on a possible trial as quickly as possible.

78.2 Repair to street light in Pipehouse

A street light in Pipehouse was on continuously. A quote for repairs indicated it would cost around £300. It was agreed that a decision on whether to repair this light should be taken once the decision on undertaking a trial switch off of the lights was made.

79. **Communications**

The Autumn edition of the Newsletter was nearly complete and it would be printed in the week beginning 15 October 2023. Volunteers would help deliver the Newsletter and the majority of costs would be covered by advertising.

A proposal to use standard email addresses for all councillors would be brought to a future meeting.

80. **Finance**

80.1 **Resolved:** to approve the following payments -

- £500.92 Selina Jobson for administration
- £80.00 ALCA for councillor training
- £550.00 Alan Duck for grass cutting and removal of fallen tree

80.2 **Resolved:** to approve the bank reconciliation, noting the following payments and receipts –

- £355.00 James Lock for grass maintenance (Standing Order)
- £400.00 Matt Snelgrove for Village Steward role (Standing Order)
- £215.01 SSE for electricity supply (Direct Debit)
- £32.51 Water2Business for water supply (Direct Debit)
- £180.00 Cemetery fees (receipt)
- £17927.17 B&NES precept (receipt)

81. **Clerk's Report**

B&NES had asked parish councils to complete a Rural Facilities Audit by 20 October 2023. The Clerk would circulate the questions to councillors.

The Clerk had attended a Society of Local Council Clerks training day on 15 September 2023.

Cllr Tibbles had attending online councillor training run by the Avon Association of Local Councils and Cllr Bate was attending this training.

82. **External Meetings**

The Bathavon Forum had been temporarily paused to review of priorities and approach.

The next Parish Liaison Meeting was on 18 October 2023 in Keynsham, details would be circulated to councillors. A Parish Information Pack had been produced to answer a range of commonly asked questions and would be circulated to councillors.

Clerk

83. **Exchange of Information**

- A Winsley Parish Councillor was looking at the possibility of restoring water meadows near The Inn at Freshford.
- Updates on the matting on The Tying and on the fence in the Cemetery would be provided at the next meeting.

84. **Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 13 November, 7pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall.

Meeting ended 9.00pm.