

FRESHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting of Freshford Parish Council 15 January 2024, 7pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall

Parish Councillors Present: John Adler (Chairman), Julian Carpenter, Jessie Forbes, John Putt

Apologies: Elli Bate, Jennifer Clamp

In attendance: Selina Jobson (Parish Clerk)

Members of the Public: Two

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

None.

116. **Minutes of Meeting**

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

117. **Matters Arising**

A meeting about the potential car park drainage and resurfacing project between the Chair of the Freshford Village Memorial Hall Committee, Chair of FLiSCA and the Chair would be arranged once the Chair of the Hall Committee had further researched costs. Freshford Village Memorial Hall had been reminded about the location of rock salt for gritting the car park in icy weather.

Limpley Stoke Parish Council were proposing that a review of the joint Limpley Stoke and Freshford Neighbourhood Plan should start by Spring 2024.

118. **Open Forum**

A resident, who had recently stood down as a parish councillor, spoke to thank the council for their work. He also reported that the Freshford and Limpley Stoke Home Energy Group had secured funding from Bath and West Community Energy for a thermal imaging camera; they were encouraging residents to borrow the camera to undertake a home energy survey.

A resident spoke to:

- Give his views on the level of the precept for 2024/25.
- Comment on the proposal to move to the Parish Council's accounts to Unity Trust Bank.
- Report that the results of a private, covert, speed camera survey he had undertaken on New Road and Freshford Lane identified vehicles travelling at more than double the speed limit. Recording vehicle speed over a 15-minute period in each direction had shown a high average speed. Councillors suggested that it might be possible to move the current Speed Indicator Device to these roads; any evidence of speeding recorded by the SID could then be used to request Police speed monitoring checks.
- Report two incidents of vehicles getting stuck in Dark Lane since the beginning of the year, reflecting a long-standing and ongoing problem with vehicles inappropriately using the lane as a through road. Councillors noted that various solutions to this problem had been considered.

119. **Co-option of Councillor**

The Parish Council had received confirmation that following the recent resignation of a councillor, no residents had requested an election and the vacancy on the parish council could be advertised. No applications had been received for co-option, and there were now three vacancies. The roles were being advertised via a community email, the

website, posters and flyers. Ideas for other approaches to recruit councillors were welcomed.

120. **Planning Applications**

- 23/04363/LBA The Old Brewery, Church Hill, BA2 7TU: Internal alterations for the replacement of floor and painting of existing service trench covers.
Resolved: No comment, but that this application should be reviewed by the Conservation Officer.
- 23/04793/FUL Abbey Cottage, Park Corner, BA2 7UQ: Internal reorganisation, removal of vestibule extension. Replace most dormers with pitched/vertical rooflights and create new window openings under permitted development.
Resolved: No comment.
- 23/04648/FUL 2 Stanley Hill Cottages, Ashes Lane, BA2 7US: Erection of a two-storey extension, creation of a new front door entrance, timber cladding over extant cement render, new triple glazed windows, air source heat pump and the replacement of the tarmac parking area with biodiverse lawn.
Resolved: To object. Whilst the Parish Council supports the objective of reducing the carbon emissions of the property, it objects to application on the grounds that the size of the additional development is inappropriate.
- 23/04397/FUL Abbotsleigh, Sharpstone Lane, BA2 7UA: Removal of scullery extension and modern conservatory, new patio doors and ground floor window to the side elevation, re-positioning of back door, new terrace, new roof light and replacement of existing roof lights and addition of photovoltaic panels.
Resolved: Support.

121. **Tree Applications**

None.

122. **Highways and Transport**

122.1 Number 94 bus service

After discussion at the December Parish Council meeting, officers from the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) had confirmed that it would not be appropriate for the Parish Council to apply for funding for the 94 bus service (or similar service) from the WESTlocal funding scheme. This scheme would only consider applications to run new, not existing, services.

With the help of an external supplier, WECA were organising Citizens' Panels on 4 and 28 February to consider how to decide which bus services to fund. Invitations had been sent to 12,000 West of England residents selected randomly and 40 Panel members would be chosen, ensuring a cross-section of people. The Panel would not make decisions on specific funding or services. Panel findings would be presented to the Metro Mayor in early March 2024, and published on the WECA website. The findings would inform how WECA made decisions about future bus service funding.

Wiltshire Council were fully funding the 94 bus service until 31 March 2024 and they would be contacted about the future of the service after this date.

Clerk

122.2 Temporary Road Closure for 'Playing Out' event, 22 March 2024

The School was continuing to consider ways of improving the safety and sustainability of school travel. A 'Playing Out' event was being organised to explore the benefits and impact 'playing out' has on children, communities and spaces. The event would be held between 2-4pm on 22 March 2024. An application to temporarily close Freshford Lane from the junction by the School to just before the entrance to the Galleries for this event had been approved by B&NES. Road safety officers from B&NES would attend Freshford School on the day of the 'Playing Out' event to provide general advice on road safety and active travel to school.

The School Governors had written to residents in local roads about the temporary road closure, and had contacted the Galleries. It was felt that additional communications with the wider community would be helpful. The Parish Council could help with this and it was agreed to hold an informal meeting about communications.

Cllr Adler

The next scheduled meeting between the School, B&NES Officers and Parish Councillors to discuss road safety initiatives was on 24 January 2024.

122.3 Other Highways updates

Cllr Adler had met with the manager of The Inn at Freshford about the possibility of yellow lines around this area. The Inn were concerned that any potential parking restrictions would reduce custom and they did not support such measures in the immediate vicinity. They acknowledged problems with incidents of poor parking by the bridge. They asked to be involved in any future discussions about parking restrictions.

Road closures along Lower Stoke had begun and would continue until the end of May 2024.

National Highways had confirmed that roadworks on the A36 around the Limpley Stoke / Freshford area were likely to start in August/September 2024. The design for the crossing option to the south of Midford Lane was being developed and would be given to the Parish Council in due course for information. Construction was unlikely before 2026.

123. **Energy Project**

Bath and West Community Energy were applying for a grant from the Government's energy scheme to fund the feasibility study for the proposed solar energy scheme. The Parish Council had provided a letter in support of the application. SSE had given verbal confirmation that the grid capacity would be able to take the electricity produced.

124. **Street Lighting**

The Parish Council had completed the paperwork for Enerveo to undertake the upgrading of 11 street lamps to LEDs, but were waiting for confirmation of the final cost of works.

The proposed trial to switch off some streetlights would be discussed at a future meeting, and would not start until Summer/Autumn 2024 at the earliest.

125. **Natural Environment**

A meeting of climate and nature group leads from local parish councils and representatives of local nature groups was taking place on 2 February 2024; Cllr Bate would attend.

A contractor had reviewed the state of the fence in the Cemetery and had confirmed that all the fence from the main entrance to the gate under the Yew tree was unstable and would therefore be removed.

A quote of £155 had been received to remove three lower limbs and to thin out an Oak tree in the Cemetery. It was agreed that this work should go ahead.

126. **Communications**

Cllr Forbes was now helping with running the Mailchimp system and would also help with maintaining the community website.

Planning for the Spring edition of the Bulletin would get underway, with local groups and organisations being contacted for articles.

127. **Finance**

127.1 Bank account

Councillors considered a proposal to move all of the Parish Council's funds from Barclays Bank and from Scottish Widows to Unity Trust Bank. Unity Trust Bank provided specialist banking services to trade unions, charities and other organisations that operated in the not-for-profit sector. Unity Trust Bank were consistently recommended by clerks, with their understanding of the parish and town council sector highlighted as a significant benefit. A current account and savings account were proposed, enabling the Parish Council to receive some interest on money held, whilst allowing instant access to all

funds. Although there was a £6/month fee for operating a current account, it was felt that this would be offset by quicker and more efficient customer service and through interest earned on the savings account. Current arrangements for managing the accounts, with access by the Clerk and two councillors, would be maintained.

Resolved: to move all of the Parish Council's funds to Unity Trust Bank, with the establishment of a current account and a savings account.

127.2 Budget

Councillors considered proposed figures for the 2024/25 budget, confirming final figures where necessary.

Resolved: to approve the budget figures for 2024/25.

127.3 Precept

Councillors considered proposed precept calculations in light of the agreed budget figures. Noting the continuing impact of inflation and taking into account potential projects in 2025/26, councillors supported a 5% increase in the Band D charge.

Resolved: to approve a 5% increase in the Band D charge, from £113.05/year to £118.81/year for 2024/25, resulting in a total precept of £38,102.75.

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

- £525.25 Selina Jobson for administration
- £26.39 Zonkey for domain name renewal

127.5 **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)
- £40.00 The Inn at Freshford for an advert in the Freshford Newsletter (Receipt)

128. **Role and Responsibilities**

It was confirmed that Cllr Clamp would take on the role of Freshford Primary School liaison.

129. **External Meetings**

No other meetings to report.

130. **Exchange of Information**

Cllr Gourley had suggested the council consider resilience planning and appointing a village flood warden. The Parish Council would give further consideration to this once additional councillors had been co-opted.

Information from B&NES about Nature Action Plans would be circulated to councillors.

Clerk

131. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was re-scheduled to Monday 19 February (from 12 February), 7pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall.

Meeting ended 9.25pm.