

# CHIPPENHAM WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL

## DRAFT MINUTES

### VIRTUAL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

held at 7.45pm

**28<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Present: Cllr S Eades, Cllr H Ham, Cllr P Reynolds and Cllr Mrs L Selman, Mr V Vines Clerk of the Council, Wiltshire Councillor H Greenman and 1 member of the public (Mr B Harvey)

**MIN 1. Apologies:** Cllr C Harford and Mrs Tracey Barrow.

**MIN 2. Annual Parish Meeting 2020:**

There was no Meeting held due to Covid-19 restrictions.

**MIN 3. Chairman's & Vice-Chairman's Report:**

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr P Reynolds and Cllr Howard Ham, reported on the Parish Council activities for the year.

The year had been dominated by Covid-19 and the Council had needed to adapt to Virtual Council Meetings. Although not face-to-face, with delegated powers given to the Clerk, the Council had been able to carry out its' duties in a proper manner. The introduction of virtual arrangements had in fact increased public participation and the Council supported the ongoing opportunities that this provided.

Covid-19 had affected all Parishioners and businesses within the Parish. Local volunteers had been able to assist vulnerable people. The Allington Farm Shop had been able to provide a valuable delivery service for customers during Lockdown.

The Council had responded to all consultations throughout the year.

A major issue faced by the Council was the consultation on Parish Boundary changes and significant efforts had been made to retain the existing boundaries despite proposals from adjacent Parishes to take over areas. The request made to include Cedar Lodge, Allington Lane within the Parish had been successful and the Boundary Commission had agreed new boundaries to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

Similarly, the Council had successfully produced evidence under the Governance Review that Chippenham Without Parish should remain as a self governing five Member Local Authority and not be dissolved and incorporated into adjoining Parishes.

The provision of high-speed fibre broadband cable ducting throughout the Parish as part of the Wiltshire Online Project had been a disruption and a close watch had been required not only on the quality of the installation works but also the reinstatement works that were still ongoing. It was hoped that the benefits following final completion would outweigh the nuisance caused during the installation works.

The continuing work of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was acknowledged.

All Council Members and the Parish Clerk were thanked for their work during the year.

**MIN 4. Parish Council's Budget 2021-2022:**

The Clerk circulated a copy of the Council's Precept decision of the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

The Council had considered Budget proposals for Year 2021-2022 together with background advice in regards to future Capital and Revenue spending requirements. There had been a need to agree a Precept requirement at the Meeting to meet the Wiltshire Council notification timescale. Detailed consideration had been given to a forward budget and cost pressures. The Council had been mindful of the fact that any increases proposed needed the support of Parishioners who would need to be informed of the reasons for any increase in spending. The Council had agreed that there was a need to maintain the Capital Fund by resisting reductions to support the Revenue Account and that, with possible increases in Revenue spending as Wiltshire Council continued to reduce services and with consideration to be given to improving Parish communications (notice boards/newsletters/website), there was a need to increase the overall budget by £2,000.00 for Capital funding projects. Using the Wiltshire Council guidance and the reduced Tax Base of 88.03 this would mean a band D property charge of £113.60 rising from £108.70 the previous year (2020/21). Consequently a Precept requirement of £12,000.00 for the next Council Year had been agreed.

**MIN 5. Report from Wiltshire Council Representative:**

Wiltshire Councillor Howard Greenman was pleased to attend to give his 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Report ending a year fraught with Covid-19 problems. He extended his thanks to the Parish Council for their work and congratulated them on how they adjusted to holding Virtual Meetings. On a personal note he was sad that the Community Area Parish Forum, well supported by the Parish Council, had been unable to meet.

Covid-19 had taken a toll on all levels of service provision at Wiltshire Council particularly in Adult Care and Social Services but an urgent additional funding intervention had assisted, although the repercussions would impact over the next few years.

Having said that, through Central Government support Wiltshire Council would be able to invest further in Adult Social Care (£8.6m), Children's Services (£8.4m), Waste Services (£2.6m) and Leisure Services (£4.5m).

In addition a 10 year Capital Program was agreed for 1000 new Council Houses (£50m), Wiltshire road maintenance (£22m), Schools (£23m), Health & Well-being (£20m) and Energy Improvements (£7m).

He was looking forward to the year ahead, following the lifting of Lockdown when things returned to normal and concluded by asking all to keep up the good work done and to continue to contact him if required.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Councillor Greenman for his advice, continued involvement and assistance during the past year.

**MIN 6. Reports from Parish Council Sub Groups and Committees:**

The Council had no Sub-Groups or Sub-Committees throughout the year.

**MIN 7. Reports from Local Organisations:**

- a) **Allington Action Group.** Howard Ham reported on the Action Group's work throughout the last year and the need to remain vigilant. A litter pick had taken place in

Allington and he encouraged other areas of the Parish to form similar volunteer groups to do occasional litter picks. He advised that he held a stock of litter picking equipment.

**MIN 8. Allington, Lanhill & Sheldon Neighbourhood Plan:**

Stephen Eades reported on progress throughout the year. Following the initial local consultations the Steering Group had drafted recommendations and re-consulted. A Draft Neighbourhood Plan had been produced and submitted to Wiltshire Council for comment. Following further consideration the updated version had been re-submitted for further comment and approval to allow external consultation and the process to reach the Regulation 14 to 18 stages and final Referendum. The timescales were now affected by the priority given by external parties but the Steering Group still hoped that in the next 12 months significant progress would be made. At the present time a vacancy existed to fill the Lead Steering Group role.

The Chairman of the Parish Council thanked Stephen and other Steering Group members for their work throughout the year and it was hoped that other volunteers would involve themselves when assistance was needed during the next 12 months.

**MIN 9. Public Questions and General Discussion of Parish Issues:**

- a) **Parish Council Elections 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021:** It was confirmed that there would be no Election as 5 eligible persons had stood for Council. The new Council would be formed by Stephen D Eades, Howard H Ham, Christopher J Harford, Paul Reynolds and Lisa J Selman
- b) **Keep Britain Tidy – Great British Spring Clean:** As usual the Council had received Keep Britain Tidy information and there was a need to ensure that the Parish was regularly litter picked. With Covid-19 restrictions now being lifted it would become possible to organise litter picks throughout the Parish. A litter pick had taken place in Allington and there was a need to encourage other areas of the Parish to form similar volunteer groups to do occasional litter picks. Howard Ham held a stock of litter picking equipment.
- c) **Defibrillator Provision within the Parish-SW Ambulance Trust Training Session:** The Council had now agreed the contract on a yearly basis and would have the benefit of a yearly training session. It had been normal for this to be held in October. Because of Covid-19 restrictions this could not be held in 2020. Subject to lifting of Covid-19 restrictions a date will be agreed for this to take place.
- d) **Community Safety/Neighbourhood Watch/Emergency Plan:** The Council was regularly updated by Wiltshire Council, Police Messaging, Neighbourhood Watch. There was a need for volunteers and Community Coordinators to be found that could provide the focal point for contact and administration. As the Parish was large there was perhaps a need for volunteers to cover the various areas (Sheldon, Lanhill, Allington) reporting to a main Coordinator. The matter of a Parish Database of email addresses would assist with distribution of information.
- e) **Traffic Speeds - Community Speedwatch – Speed identification devices:** The Council had recently considered a reduction in national speed limit on the A420 from Bumpers Farm to past The Longstone. Wiltshire Council had been approached. Neighbouring Parishes had become involved in speedwatch campaigns and had installed devices and if speeding became more evident in the Parish these could be considered.
- f) **Notice Boards -Communications- within the Parish:** Neighbourhood Plan consultations had identified the need for improved communications within the Parish. Suggestions included the replacement and provision of additional larger sized accessible notice boards, increased use of social media, newsletters, website, etc. There was also a need to promote

the Parish, possibly by highway entrance gates and the like. The new Council would need to address these issues.

- g) **Covid-19 – Impact on the Parish:** The Pandemic and the repercussions had affected Parishioners and businesses within the Parish. Local volunteers had assisted vulnerable people and although some had been infected as far as it was known there had been no deaths. The Allington Farm Shop had been able to provide a valuable delivery service for customers during Lockdown.
- h) **Gigaclear.** The provision of high-speed fibre broadband cable ducting throughout the Parish as part of the Wiltshire Online Project had been completed. This would allow all to connect through a chosen service provider. There remained issues regarding reinstatement works that the Parish Council was pursuing.
- h) **Public Rights of Way-Footpath maintenance:** The importance of the designated Rights of Way within the Parish was acknowledged and it was stressed that the Parish Council and volunteers would need to protect and enhance them so that they remained open for use. There was a need for proper signage and safe stiles. Comment was made that some adjacent Parishes had formed volunteer groups. Concern was expressed that some unlawful blockages, such as electric fences, were in place that needed resolving with landowners, perhaps requiring the intervention of Wiltshire Council. Reference was made to discussions on the proposals by Chippenham Town Council in their draft Neighbourhood Plan to include and enhance Rights of Way links into the Parish for both the public and wildlife and there would be a need for agreement to be reached.
- i) **Council Precept 2021-2022:** Mr Barrie Harvey raised the issue of the rise in Parish Council Precept for the year. The issue being that although small in financial terms the percentage increase when seen alongside those of Wiltshire Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Emergency Services published on the information provided to Council Tax Payers appeared to be significant. It was acknowledged that the Council needed to set the Precept based upon the Tax Base advised by Wiltshire Council for a band D property charge. This may not reflect the actual situation for other Tax bands. Mr Harvey suggested that it would be useful if Parishioners could be informed of what each Tax band paid. This would not be possible through the Wiltshire Council publication process but the Clerk suggested that the information could be acquired and made available. However, this would be dependent on how the Parish Council determined their forward communication strategy by the use of newsletters, social media, website, notice boards etc. It reinforced the need for a Parish GDPR protected database where a substantial proportion of Parishioners could be regularly updated by email with a minimum requirement for hard copy circulation with the associated costs to the Council and ultimately the Council Tax Payer.

There were no further questions or issues raised.

**MIN 10. Closure of Meeting:**

The Parish Council Chairman thanked all those who had attended the Annual Parish Meeting and closed the Meeting at 9.05pm.

Signed:

Councillor:

Date: