

BICKNOLLER PARISH COUNCIL – 28 OCTOBER 2019

An extraordinary meeting of the Council was held in the Village Hall at 7.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors C Warren, J Anderson, S Dowding, A Harrison, K Ogilvie-White, M Rawle and Mrs C Skinner.

IN ATTENDANCE: County Councillor Mrs C Lawrence, Mrs C Richards (Clerk) and one member of the public

PARISH FORUM: None.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillors A H Trollope-Bellew and M Rigby.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Councillor J Anderson declared a personal interest in Item 5, Trees on Woolston Moor, as Chairman of Quantock Eco.

Councillor K Ogilvie-White declared a personal interest in Item 4, Motion to declare Bicknoller Parish a frack free zone, as Chairman and Founder of 'Frack Free Somerset' and 'Frack Free EQ' (Exmoor, Quantocks and Sedgemoor).

3. MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2019 & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 September 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman proposed varying the order of business and it was resolved to take the remaining Agenda items in the following order.

4. MOTION TO DECLARE BICKNOLLER PARISH A FRACK FREE ZONE

(A Briefing Paper for Parish Councillors on fracking had been circulated prior to the meeting by Councillor Ogilvie-White.)

Councillor Ogilvie-White stated the fact that licences had been issued which cover the potential for fracking to take place anywhere between Minehead & Nailsea, anywhere along the coastline. Already a number of Councils within these areas had declared frack free zones. SCC has responsibility for receiving planning applications for exploratory onshore access drilling and we as a local Parish Council would have an opportunity to feedback our thoughts on that planning application. Declaring the Parish Council a frack free zone would not pre-determine the Parish Council's thoughts on an application should one be received by SCC. He further confirmed that both Somerset West and Taunton Council and Sedgemoor District Councils had resolved to be Frack Free zones.

Following discussion, during which opposing views were expressed, it was resolved by a vote of 5 to 2 –

1. To declare Bicknoller Parish a Frack Free zone.
2. To support the stance taken by West Somerset and Taunton, and Sedgemoor District Councils in respect to their resolved Frack Free motions on 16th July and 9th October respectively.

Councillor Dowding requested a recorded vote on this item –
5 for (Councillors J Anderson, A Harrison, K Ogilvie-White, M Rawle and C Warren)
2 against (Councillors S Dowding and Mrs C Skinner)

5. TREES ON WOOLSTON MOOR

Parish Councillors acknowledged the letters and emails from residents of Woolston expressing objections to the planting of trees on Woolston Moor, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. They were keen to stress that this was only a proposal and it had not been agreed to undertake the work.

Councillor Anderson stated that at the previous Parish Council meeting, permission, in principle, had been given to the idea of planting a small number of trees on Woolston Moor, and he and Councillor Skinner had been tasked with looking into this and reporting back to a future meeting. He read a statement which proposed that no further consideration of the idea should take place, for the following reasons –

1. Research has shown, and the Open Spaces Society has corroborated it, that Woolston Moor is Common Land by Act of Parliament.
2. Several farmers have grazing rights on Woolston Moor.
3. Tree planting on common land is not allowed without the permission of the Secretary of State.

He further stated that, although he cannot but think that the scale of the exploratory ideas has been misinterpreted by the parishioners in Woolston, he apologised for the distress it may have caused. He understood perfectly and respected their concerns. It was resolved (1) that it makes no sense for the Parish Council to proceed further with this subject for the reasons stated above and (2) that a copy of Councillor Anderson's statement should be circulated to residents of Woolston.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman asked that all email correspondence pertinent to the Parish Council should be circulated to all Parish Councillors, with the Clerk being copied in. He further advised that the Parish Council had been asked by a new agent acting on behalf of a client who had previously had a planning application for 12 dwelling houses refused in Church Lane, Bicknoller, to attend the next meeting to present amended proposals for 5 dwelling houses in order to gain initial feedback prior to submitting them to Somerset West and Taunton Council. Following discussion, it was resolved (1) not to accede to the agent's request and to advise that the Parish Council would wait for the application to follow the normal Somerset West & Taunton Council planning procedure and (2) to request that the agent send the Parish Clerk paper copies of the plans when they have been submitted to Somerset West and Taunton Council.

7. DEFIBRILLATOR SUPPORT PACKAGE

The Clerk advised that the defibrillator support package was due to be renewed in March 2021 so there was a need to include costs in next year's budget. She confirmed that the cost, at the present time, for renewal was £3360 including VAT for a new four year package. Mention was made that the First Responders pack also contained a defibrillator which could be utilised. It was resolved (1) that, based on a possible increase in the above figures before March 2021, the number of defibrillators be reduced to one and (2) that a decision be taken towards the end of 2020 as to which defibrillator would be removed. Councillors were keen to stress that the decision in resolution (1) was a difficult one and had been taken purely on a financial basis.

8. HEDGE CUTTING

Councillor Anderson updated on his meeting with Kevin Bridgwater, Assistant Highways Service Manager, when it was reiterated that landowners were responsible for their own hedge cutting. He confirmed that SCC Highways have template letters to send to landowners. The first letter advises landowners that a hedge needs cutting and should be cut within two weeks. If this letter produces no result, a second letter is sent advising that SCC Highways would be notified and the work will be undertaken by them and recharged to the landowner. It was acknowledged that one of the difficulties would be identifying the landowners. It was resolved (1) that the Parish Council modify the SCC Highways letters to suit its circumstances (2) Councillors J Anderson, C Warren and M Rawle undertake a tour of the Parish to identify areas which need attention and send letters out to relevant landowners (3) advise all that this will be an annual procedure and request that they fulfil their obligations during the months of September and October and (4) using local knowledge, establish, within GDPR rules, a register of the contact details of landowners throughout the Parish for use on such occasions.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13 November 2019

7.00 pm

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

Signed:
Chairman

Date: