

NOTES of PUBLIC MEETING

held on Wednesday 7 July 2021 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Witcham

Present: M Housden – Parish Council Chairman

Mrs S J Bell Parish Clerk

Parish Councillors J Bibby, L Holdaway, K Mackender, S Wilkin (7.31pm)

4 residents

Chairman's Announcement: Chairman welcomed everyone to this public meeting which had been arranged to engage with residents on a number of projects the Council had been working on during the Covid-19 pandemic. This had been made some weeks ago and advertised on the website, noticeboard and published in the house-to-house newsletter at the beginning of June. Unfortunately, it now clashed with the European semi-final football match being played by England. Covid-19 pandemic restrictions set by the Government had prevented face to face meetings since March 2020 but under the Government's opening up roadmap it had been expected restrictions would have been lifted on 21 June. This had now been deferred to 19 July. The projects on the agenda tonight had formed part of the agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting held 28 April 2021, which had had to be held as a remote meeting* on Zoom but unfortunately this had been poorly attended.

** The Coronavirus Act 2020 s.78 and The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.*

1 **Apologies for absence:** received and accepted from J Lucas.

2 **Recreation Ground – New play Equipment and Facilities**

L Holdaway reported that a survey had been carried out in the Autumn although response low; only 19 returns but it revealed that people would like items for all ages and equipment to be of environmentally friendly materials. L Holdaway and K Mackender had met with Wicksteed on 6 July and suggested plans and costs from some suppliers would soon be available for sharing with residents. She hoped children would get involved.

Member of the public asked if there would be equipment for teenagers and adults such as cross trainer and it was confirmed this was the intention.

3 **Recreation Ground – Tree Management – Replacement Tree Programme**

J Bibby presented pictures and information about trees for planting on the recreation ground at the corner of High Street/Martin's Lane as put forward by the tree officer and nurserymen. Some of the trees planted over the last 3-4 years had not survived on this corner. Soil tests had identified no problems; the soil containing some clay and suitable for tree planting. This corner of the recreation was exposed to wind and dry conditions so hawthorn (*Crataegus*) would be suitable. Other suggested species were *Celtis occidentalis*, *Corylus colurna*, Liquidamber, *Ostrya carpinifolia*, *Paulownia tomentosa*, *Prunus sargentii*, *Styphnolobium japonicum*, *Zelkova serrata*, *Malus*. Costs £150-£170 per tree including stake, ties and pillow for watering system. It was hoped the community would engage to help with planting the trees: phase 1 this autumn and phase 2 next year once the new play area had been finished - the Horse Chestnut trees here were not in good condition and would need to be removed to keep the area safe.

There were offers from people present to assist with purchasing trees and J Bibby undertook to pass on details of the recommended trees.

There was a suggestion for planting tree(s) to commemorate the Queens Jubilee next year, together with a plaque and organised event.

It was reported that some people had looked into buying land from the Church Commissioners to make a copse.

It was confirmed that tree stumps in the south-west corner of the recreation ground would be ground out and the Council would review the tall stumps for a carving.

Water for the new trees was available from an outside tap at the Village Hall.

4 **Launch of Parish Council Website**

Clerk advised that the new website witchamparishcouncil.gov.uk would be opened shortly; a dedicated site enabling the Council to meet Transparency and WACG Regulations. Information about the Council including agendas, minutes, finance, and news would be available. There would be links to the Village Hall's new website, the Witcham Archive Group, the local Planning Authority's portal for planning applications in Witcham, the District and County Council and other useful contacts.

5 **Witcham Community Archive Membership and Activities**

The group had dropped from a membership of some 6 people to 2 since its inception in the 1990s. Material for more recent village events and items of interest were no longer being submitted so keeping the website going was difficult. Without increasing the membership and interest within the village there was concerns that it would fold and funds for the subscription to the website host, Cambridgeshire County Council, would dry up. L Holdaway offered material and had raised £50 to help with subscription fees. The Chairman confirmed the Council was keen to help to support and had offered to help raise the profile; perhaps an item could be provided to go on the Council's new website and newsletters, and residents be encouraged to write items of interest and news for the Archive website as a regular event. This led to discussion about the fields off The Slade that had been sold and the concerns about the historic use of one as a dog-walking field and the route of a Public Right of Way. The Chairman suggested that the member(s) of the public might wish to attend the next Council meeting to discuss further and this was agreed.

6 **Results of Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs**

Chairman reported that tables and graphs were being produced and published on website, and this would be a monthly feature. Data collected gave details of speeds, days/time, and volumes of traffic and patterns had emerged. Speeds of vehicles travelling at 50mph had been recorded 7.30/8.00am. The Council was gathering the information to get speedwatch and Police checks. There was discussion about speeding traffic in High Street and Silver Street, which would be discussed at the next Council meeting with a view to obtaining further brackets so the MVAS scheme could be extended. Reports of courier service vans speeding in High Street were received and it was suggested registration plate numbers, date and time details should be taken and reported to the operator when this was observed.

It was noted that new roadmarkings were planned for High Street at the junction of Headleys Lane, and others renewed.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 8.15pm