

COLESHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Monday 13th January 2025

Meeting held at the Old Timber Store, Carpenter's Yard, Coleshill at 6.30pm

MINUTES

1. Present

Councillors Rory Souter (in the chair), Vicki Mace-Benson, Jo Jameson, Rachel Knight & Oliver Fox; County Councillor Bethia Thomas; District Councillor Viral Patel; Charles Leather (National Trust); Gemma Fox, Katherine Hearn, Sue Homersham, Guy Jordan, Verity Manners, Jamie Metcalfe-Tarren, David & Sarah North, Mandy Painter, Irene Pietersen, Ken & Janet Ragon-Chambers, Ros Webster.

2. Apologies

District Councillor Katherine Foxhall sent apologies for her absence.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the meeting on 7th October 2024 were approved by the PC and those present.

4. Matters arising

a) Traffic, road, drains and signage issues:

Progress on a number of issues was recorded, including the replacement and fixing of road signs in the village and along the B4019 towards Faringdon.

The hazardous state of the road surface between Colleymore Farm and Badbury Hill was discussed, with many reports of damage to vehicles from the potholes on both sides of the carriageway. The issue was discussed again in the report from the County Council below.

The clearance of road drains in the village was also discussed in the report from the County Council below.

b) Churchyard wall:

Ros Webster reported that works were scheduled to begin in the near future, Sue Homersham thanked Hannah Oughton, the Project Officer from the District Council, for making recent progress within the council and with the Diocese.

c) Parkland visitor management and conservation:

An increase in visitors to the park was noted following removal of the cattle for the winter. Charles Leather reported that the National Trust were monitoring the access and numbers of visitors to the parkland, with a review of the pathways and access around the fields. More signage and public engagement could be

used to improve the experience for visitors and residents. Katherine Hearn mentioned that we were expecting the National Trust to report back to the PC about the issue of visitors to the parkland. It was suggested that dogwalkers who visit regularly could help with wardening the access to the park, although Jamie Metcalfe-Tarren asked what rules could be imposed without putting people at risk. Charles Leather said that the National Trust would be exploring options, such as restricting access to some areas during the bird nesting season.

d) Old Hayes Solar Farm proposal:

Vicki Mace-Benson gave a comprehensive summary of the work and meetings of the Solar Farm Focus Group which has been meeting regularly since the last PC meeting in October. The current status of the proposal was outlined, including that a planning application has yet to be submitted. The Focus Group has contacted ABEI Energy with a series of questions and concerns relating to various aspects of the proposals, including construction, flooding, conservation landscape and other impacts. Local MP Charlie Maynard has visited the village to discuss the proposal with the focus group and PC members.

The National Trust are in contact with ABEI Energy and will meet with them at the end of January. Sue Homersham has circulated a summary of the proposal and the concerns of the local residents to her mailing list as well as to neighbouring towns and villages. Jamie Metcalf-Tarren, Leone Ward, Ros Webster and others have produced a flyer (attached to these minutes) which will be circulated locally to raise awareness. Many residents in neighbouring villages have expressed concerns directly to Charlie Maynard.

There will be another meeting of the focus group on Monday 20th January. Ros Webster asked about the meeting between the National Trust and ABEI Energy and that outcomes from the meeting be shared with the Solar Farm Focus Group. Charles Leather reported that the National Trust would be challenging the proposal due to the impact on the historic landscape, the conservation area and the flooding risk.

5. Finances

Rachel Knight shared the good news that she was expecting a baby and would not be able to attend PC meetings over the next year but would stay on as a councillor. During this time, the administration of the PC finances will be supported by Jo Jameson and Vicky Mace-Benson. Rory Souter wished Rachel and her family well.

Rachel Knight reported that the precept will be kept the same for the next year. This was proposed by Rory Souter and seconded by Vicky Mace-Benson.

Payments from the PC account have included the last cut for the year of the cemetery and some costs associated with the village website.

6. National Trust Liaison Committee

Verity Manners reported that there was not much to update from the Liaison Committee but they had attended the meeting about the 10 year strategy of the National Trust.

7. National Trust Report

Charles Leather discussed the main points of the National Trust report, attached to these minutes, including:

- a) The response to the solar farm proposal, with a meeting with ABEI Energy planned for the end of January. The Trust can share some of the outcomes from this meeting with the focus group.**
- b) Substantial work due to the flooding of properties on the estate and planning for future events.**
- c) Lots of works on the let estate as described in the report, including many residential properties and forthcoming planning applications for works in Granary and removal of the black barn in Carpenter's Yard.**
- d) Update on the tree planting happening this winter around the estate, including new Hazel coppices at Great Coxwell.**

Charles Leather personally thanked Christian Walker for all his work for the National Trust in West Oxfordshire and wished him well in his new position in Yorkshire. On behalf of the PC, Rory Souter expressed sincere thanks to Christian Walker for his committed and sensitive management of the estate over the last 8 years and that we were sorry to see him go. Rory requested a meeting with the interim General Manager Keith Assirati-Wilkie as soon as he is settled into the job.

8. Local Government Reports: District and County Councillors

District Councillor Viral Patel provided an update and said a combined December and January report would be forthcoming.

Discussions of the local care board in southwest Oxfordshire were ongoing with the District Council meeting regularly with stakeholders. Flooding has been a major issue in the region and the District Council has been reviewing options with the Environment Agency.

The solar farm proposal was discussed again and David North asked if the District Council were expecting to make the decision on the planning application or if it expected the government to intervene.

The future of the District Council was discussed with potential to make a unitary authority in the region.

Bethia Thomas discussed her report, which she had shared with the PC before the meeting, including the following subjects:

- a) The status of the road between Badbury Hill and Colleymore Farm which is very dangerous with large potholes on either side of the carriageway. Bethia said she was on top of reports on Fix-my-street and many of those present at the meeting reported how dangerous the stretch of road had become with the potential for a traffic accident if something not done soon. The PC requested that temporary traffic lights be installed until the road is fixed to make the road safer. The impact on those who had**

damaged vehicles was discussed. Bethia said she would follow this up with urgency.

- b) The clearing of road drains in the village should be prioritised and be carried out soon. Bethia requested that she be updated if the works are or are not undertaken when scheduled.
- c) The visit of local MP Charlie Maynard to speak to members of the Solar Farm Focus Group was discussed.
- d) Bethia provided a useful summary of proposals for local government reorganisation which will likely result in the District Council and County Council being replaced by a new unitary authority which carries out all the functions of the local government for a particular area. There are several models which could be adopted and how areas are divided up will have a large impact on the position of small villages within the unitary authority. There was concern that small rural voices would struggle to be heard if lumped with larger cities and towns. There is a need to keep democracy as local as possible and Bethia stated that she was keen to keep the rural identity of villages and small towns in the area. Options for lumping areas include linking all of Oxfordshire, or Oxfordshire except the city of Oxford, or joining Oxford and Swindon, or combining rural areas in south Oxfordshire and west Berkshire. Ros Webster asked about timescales for these changes and it was reported that these changes would be carried out within this parliament, so would need to happen between now and 2028. It was discussed that the solar farm decision is likely to come before any changes. Ros Webster asked about the impact of these changes on the recent Joint Local Plan and it was proposed that this would be taken on by the new authority although this is not certain. There might be some impact on the May elections which may need to be postponed. Vicki Mace-Benson expressed concern that these local government changes may impact on the solar farm planning application decision process.

The latest reports from the County and District Councils will be circulated with these minutes.

10. Planning applications

No planning applications received.

11. Any other business

- a) Sue Homersham asked about the provision of a Christmas tree for the village green each year, which she kindly covered the cost of recently. Sue requested that in future the tree be paid for by the PC and National Trust on an alternating basis. There is a good source of a tree locally.
- b) Ros Webster asked if more people could provide updates for the village website and the PC will encourage events to be publicised there. The Radnor Arms will be asked to submit regular updates too.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 7th April 2025 at 6.30 pm at the Old Timber Store unless otherwise notified.