

Minutes of the Old Marston Parish Council Environment Committee Meeting held on the 30th September 2021 at the Roy Garner Pavilion from 6:00pm.

Present:

Peter Williams (PW) – Chairman Alistair Morris (AM) – Vice-chairman

Louise Milford (LM)

Charlotte Vinnicombe (CV)

Mary James (MJ)

Tim Cann (Clerk)

Members of Public: 0

ENV 21/09/01 Intention to record the proceedings of the meeting: NONE.

ENV 21/09/02 Apologies for Absence: NONE.

It was **RESOLVED** to co-opt Skye Denno onto the Environment Committee.

ENV 21/09/03 Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 17th June 2021. It was **RESOLVED** these are a true record.

ENV 21/09/04 Matters Arising (omitting those for which an agenda heading follows):

- The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend PW's response to the County Councils decision to proceed with upgrading Back Lane. His proposed response is attached.
- It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that collecting the grass cuttings should be added to the contract when re-tendered in the new year.

ENV 21/09/05 Boults Lane Recreation Ground/Allotments boundary hedge:

- AM advised that if laying the hedge, the dead matter needs to be removed then after 8 to 10 years it would be of a condition to lay. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend proceeding with Tender One.

ENV 21/09/06 Parish Council Map of the footpaths with points of interest marked on:

- PW gave the Clerk his suggestions for improvements, and it was **RESOLVED** this would be reviewed at the next committee meeting.

ENV 21/09/07 Feasibility of buying an electric vehicle to use as part of a Parish Council supported car share scheme:

- After some discussion it was **RESOLVED** to recommend that this be discussed as part of the open meeting.

Signed by the Chairman.

ENV 21/09/08 Recommend the Parish Council hold an Open Meeting to discuss Climate Change, sometime in the 2nd half of November, immediately after, and to tie in with, UK hosting COP26 in Glasgow:

- After some discussion it was **RESOLVED** to recommend holding an open meeting on Climate Change with the details of time, content, contributors or chair to being discussed by the full Council.

ENV 21/09/09 Sending a delegation of Parish Councillor's to the next Fully Charged Read Show in April/May 2022 in Farnborough:

- It was **RESOLVED** to recommended that any Councillor can attend if they wish, and it would be for the Council to decide if it would cover any costs.

ENV 21/09/10 Biodiversity Action Plan:

- It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that Back Lane was added to the Action Plan.
- It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that Council adopt this document under the understanding that further work would be needed.

ENV 21/09/11 Items of an urgent nature which have come to the Clerk's attention since the agenda was set:

NONE.

ENV 21/09/12 Information sharing (including correspondence)

NONE.

ENV 21/09/13 Date of Next Meeting:

Thursday 9th December 2021 at 6 pm in the Roy Garner Pavilion.

MEETING CLOSED: 7:22pm

It beggars belief that in a democratic society, Oxfordshire County Council can ignore a petition of over 500 signatures as well as objections from Old Marston Parish Council and our local City councillors to desist from 'improving' Back Lane, a unique 'Green Lane' in the parish, unusually rich in its biodiversity. Re-surfacing the path and 'culling overgrown vegetation' will inevitably affect the habitat and, despite reassurances from the Director for Environment, Mr Cotton, cause significant harm. The focus seems to be in making the lane a cycle track, by laying a hard surface, although in a letter to one of our Parish Councillors, Mr Bbosa, Senior Transport Planner, contradicts himself when he says 'we clearly do not propose to hard surface the path'. His letter goes further and states that 'there is no proposal to widen the path' which makes it clear he hasn't visited the site since in converting it into a route suitable for cyclists would mean cutting hedges and destroying bushes would be inevitable. Improvements, he says, are intended to be 'sympathetic to the sensitivities of the area'... but not it seems to local residents. Alternative routes for cyclists are either said to be unaffordable or have yet to be forthcoming, despite the fact that at a recent meeting of Councillors, to which the County were invited but couldn't come, it was suggested that monies might be made available to the Parish to create improvements that would make such alternative proposals possible.

It feels increasingly to us at the Parish Council, and to the residents we represent, that our opinions count for little and decisions are made that in no way accord with local sentiment. Pedestrians, dog walkers and the occasional horse continue to enjoy this piece of rural tranquility. Even the occasional wet patch doesn't deter people who value this piece of medieval green belt, a piece of land which hitherto the County has taken no interest in.

Old Marston has already been deprived of a significant amount of Green Belt for housing. We are determined to lose no more.

Signed by the Chairman.