

Tackley Parish Council
Minutes
Informal meeting of Council
16 June 2015

Present: Councillor June Collier (Chair), Councillor Paul Joslin (V Chair)
Councillors Liz Marshall, Neil Wilson, John Cook, Les Summers

Apologies for absence: Councillor Robin Gibbons, Linda Jones (Clerk).

Also attended: Mr Richard Macrory and three parishioners

Clr Collier opened the meeting at 19.02 and invited Mr Macrory to update the meeting regarding discussions with FGW and Network Rail. He recapped on previous activities before reporting that he had recently met Ms Jane Jones (FGW Head of Communications) who was extremely positive about the strategy improvement plan the Parish Council had submitted to FGW last year. It was apparent that electrification of the railway would not occur before 2019 but that there was a proposal to institute a shuttle service between Banbury and Oxford (with some extensions to Didcot) from 2017. She had emphasised that no reduction in service was planned, indeed it could provide more flexibility with the timetable and a minimum 90 minute interval between trains was likely. There was also a commitment to consult on timetable changes.

Furthermore a £2.2 million improvement fund was being set up to assist local areas on initiatives that were not economic in conventional terms. Referring to suggestions that had been made on behalf of Tackley, Ms Jones had said that Tackley was seen as an ideal participant in this scheme and invited proposals for funding including a year round Sunday service, a new shelter on the 'down' platform, a Friends of Tackley Station notice board, shopping tickets to Oxford and Banbury and dedicated promotional websites. Councillor Summers commented that better local promotion of railway facilities would certainly be useful.

A bid would be made next week and and FGW advised that chances of success would be improved if the Parish Council could offer some 'matching' funds as a sign of support, such as £500 towards promotional material. Letters of support for the bids were desirable and it was agreed that Councilors Cottrell Dormer and Hudspeth and Mr Cameron's office be asked to undertake this. It was important to meet the timing for the bids for which the deadline was in July. It was therefore essential to get in early. Mr Macrory was away during most of July and the need was for the Parish Council to take the lead in obtaining the necessary paper work, completing it and submitting it to the FGW.

On the matter of the crossing Mr Macrory was less sanguine. Despite records of incidents, all notified to Network Rail (NR), as a result of which some residents were disinclined to use the crossing, NR appeared to consider it to be reasonably safe. The previous crossings manager supported local concerns and had managed to collect £1.9m for funding a bridge or subway south of the station though this might be insufficient for that location. The Balliol Farm proposals with the possibility of car parking facilities and a bridge to include the bridal way onto the north end of the station provided an attractive, less intensive and more economical option. NR had been asked by the Parish Council to undertake a feasibility study for this option (without any prejudice to the outcome of the planning application) but the new Crossings Officer had reported that they were not prepared to invest funds in a feasibility study for a scheme given overall costs which had jumped to £5 million in a year. NR now appeared even to be saying that the crossing was in good condition, and Mr Macrory had real concern that the funds allocated to Tackley would be used elsewhere.

Mr Macrory continued that he and Councilor Gibbons had met David Cameron's office earlier in the week and that the NR response had engendered some concern. They were informed that Mr Cameron would be prepared to write a firm letter to NR setting out his dismay at their attitude, and demanding an assurance that the money allocated to Tackley would not be jeopardized; also that the credibility study for the Balliol

Farm site be undertaken. They had also asked Mr Paul Brooks and Mr Stephen Wren, experts in bridge design and safety and who had already shown interest in these matters, to report their reactions; the latter had already dismissed NR's claim about the cost of the study and supports the idea of the Barwood bridge. The cost of Mr Wren making a formal study of the Barwood proposal which Mr Cameron's office said would be useful, would be £1,000. Mr Macrory had suggested that he would bear this cost but it was agreed that he should forward the receipt to the PC for reimbursement. Additionally the Council should send a strongly worded letter to NR.

Finally Mr Macrory reported that Councilor Gibbons had established a Friends of Tackley Station group and that he was arranging for a training session with Richard Fry, the Oxford rail manager.

The Chair thanked Mr Macrory for his work on this matter and for giving the Council a detailed statement of developments.

Planning

Councilor Cooke reported that WODC planning authority was still validating the Balliol Farm application and it had not yet been registered. The Chair added that this matter could not be discussed until that happens and another meeting would be called when the details were available.

Street Farm

Noting that despite strong objection, the Street Farm application had been given consent, Councilor Marshall asked if any reduction in the size of the development could be achieved. Councilor Cooke replied that the application had been for Outline Consent and therefore nothing further could be done until a Reserved Matters application was made, except to request inclusion of Conditions seeking to secure those benefits identified in the Parish Council's official response. These were -

- 1) Allotment boundary – irregular and increased planting to provide a woodland area to benefit the school.

2) St.Johns Road. boundary – introduce of 90 degree parking bays, thereby increasing the (oversubscribed) lay-by spaces rather than just maintaining the existing provision.

3) Footpath boundary – incorporating the retained trees into the existing footpath zone and providing a much needed “collection” area at the school entrance for parents.

The Chairman would write to the planning authority giving notice of the council’s interest in these matters in order to have them included in the legal document of the Consent before it was published.

Councillor Marshall added that if the development went ahead there would be a need for traffic calming facilities in St Johns Road and Councillor Wilson suggested that this matter should be an agenda item at the next meeting. The Nethercott Road parking problem was discussed and Councillor Cooke recommended the appointment of a professional Highways Engineer to assess and report on the problem and to address the position taken by OCC Highways. The Chairman agreed to initiate this action.

Drainage

Councillor Cooke expressed concern about the continuing dichotomy between what Thames Water was saying to the Parish Council and WODC planning officers. The Parish Council was advised, following four meetings, that the existing foul drainage system had adequate capacity to service the village whereas they had advised WODC that they: *had identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this application.* He was asked to attempt some clarification of these points as the Balliol Farm application may be similarly confused.

Councillor Summers explained that the drainage problem identified at the manhole by the village hall had been examined and the likely cause of the recent overflow established. Steps were being taken to eradicate the problem.

Parish Clerk

The Chair said that the primary reason for calling the meeting was to discuss the accounts but the Clerk being absent this could not be done. In fact she had resigned her position effective from the appointment of a successor. Councillor Wilson explained the procedure for appointing a new Clerk, involving a requirement for public notice of the vacancy. Those who had already put their names forward should also be informed of arrangements. Councillor Wilson said that, in principle, he was prepared to chair the interview panel and Councillors Marshall and Summers volunteered to support him. It was agreed that the position should be advertised before the end of the school year and that interviews should be held before the end of July.

Stagecoach S4 bus service

From the floor a resident raised concern that the withdrawal of the Sunday S4 service through Tackley was the prelude to the weekday service also being withdrawn. He had tried to get information about this from Stagecoach but they had not responded to his approaches. He suggested that the Parish Council should interest itself in the matter. Councillor Paul Joslin said that part of the problem was that it was a subsidised service and these were under threat. It was agreed that the Chair would contact Stagecoach and that the matter would then be discussed with Councillor Hudspeth (OXCC) at the meeting on 6 July.

There being no other business the meeting was closed at 20.30