

SHACKLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES of Zoom meeting on 9 November 2020

Present – Bridget Carter-Manning (Chairman), Fran Nowlan (Vice Chairman), Sally Wyse, Philip Randall, Paula Booth, Tony Rooth (GBC Councillor), Matt Furniss (SCC Councillor) and Kate Lingard (Clerk).

Members of the Public – Angus Stovold.

36/20 - Apologies for Absence – Neil Smith and Peter Stovold.

37/20 - Declarations of Interest – none.

38/20 - Minutes of meeting held on 7 September 2020 – approved and to be signed by BCM.

39/20 - Matters Arising - none.

40/20 – County and Borough Councillors – MF said that SCC are operating as normal a service as possible in lockdown, for example, recycling centres are open, highways works are continuing, grit bins have been topped up etc. He reported that the planning phase for the tree initiative from SCC is underway (to plant 1.2m trees) and AS suggested part of the Cyder House Field (the “Field”) for some young trees, as the soil is poor and it would benefit the wildlife margins along the Field. The Councillors approved this as a suggestion and agreed this could be beneficial to encourage wildlife. MF suggested that he and John Igglesdon (SCC arboriculture manager) visit the Field to discuss with AS and BCM in greater depth. MF confirmed that SCC cover the cost of the trees, planting, guards and supports. MF said that he hopes to be able to fund SPC’s request for two liquidambar or similar specimen trees on Shackleford Green – BCM to follow up. MF said there had been reports from residents of water running down the sides of Peper Harow Road and that SCC were considering widening the gully by the Cyder House to improve its capacity.

TR reported that the leadership of GBC had changed to Cllr Joss Bigmore, in accordance with the leadership sharing agreement between R4GB and the Liberal Democrats. TR suggested that if any residents have any problems with rats that they report them to GBC now, as from next year the GBC service dealing with such issues will no longer be free. TR was pleased to hear that there were fewer issues with construction traffic accessing Ockford Park through Eashing and noted that the Eashing Sang is due to be opened officially in March. PR asked what the trigger was for the Ockford Park developer’s infrastructure contribution and TR to report back.

41/20 - Highways and Byways – BCM again detailed recent work to a footpath and bridleway in Hurtmore which has left a dangerous 2m drop on one side of the path and said that she had reported this to the Countryside Access officer. MF said that he would ask the officer to visit the site and inspect the issue further. BCM reported that an SPC grit bin on the corner of Summers Lane and Hurtmore Road had been stolen. MF to check if the decommissioned SCC grit bin at the end of Quarry Road, which is due to be removed through lack of use, could instead be moved to replace the missing SPC grit bin. BCM said that she had been asked to provide licences for SPC grit bins; BCM to forward the correspondence onto MF. BCM also to follow up silt traps that should have been installed. AS reported that works to improve the road falling away near Lydling pond had stopped due to the presence of a badgers’ sett, but that the road was still falling away dangerously – MF to follow this up. FN to report a pothole left by contractors on Lombard Street. PB said that overgrown trees on the A3 slip road to the A3 by The Squirrel were limiting sightlines and making it dangerous to turn right to Hurtmore Bottom and MF noted this on his list. PR said that he had logged an idea for a pedestrian path in Eashing on the SCC Active Travel page and sent this to MF; MF to follow up. PR said that Bahram Assadi from SCC Highways had been due to come out to review recent Eashing traffic calming measures but this had been cancelled due to the pandemic; PR to follow up to see if he can now visit to assess. BCM reported that it was still the aim to get the variable speed sign up in Eashing. MF reported that he is still chasing the relevant officer to provide a highways sign for the Eashing Filling station on the A3.

42/20 - Cyder House Field Trees – see above 40/20 for suggestion for SCC tree planting commitment.

The recent removal of an oak tree on the Field was then discussed. BCM explained that some years ago, a large oak on the Field had unfortunately been damaged by the Shackleford Green developers when laying service cables. SPC had hoped that the smaller oak next to it would grow to take its place, but in 2019 the GBC arboriculturist confirmed that this smaller oak had been damaged significantly by someone removing its lead branches. The Field is subject to an agricultural tenancy and the tenant, AS, confirmed he had not carried out the action nor authorised anyone to enter the Field to do so. The GBC arboriculturist confirmed that, as the lead branches had been removed, the oak would now be unlikely to grow to maturity in place of the larger oak and that in his view, if no permission had been granted by SPC, then this removal of the lead branches amounted to criminal damage.

SPC made enquiries of residents in the neighbouring properties, to see if anyone knew who had been responsible, and eventually Mr Richard Grove confirmed that he had removed several branches to prevent the oak from growing to block his view.

Mr Grove then asked if the oak could be moved/removed permanently and offered to relocate the oak. After some discussion it was decided that this would be inadvisable due to possible proximity to service cables. Instead, a proposal of Mr Grove to chop down the oak and replace it was put on the July agenda.

The clerk reported that Mr Grove had been unable to attend the 6th July meeting but that to help expedite the matter for Mr Grove and avoid waiting a further two months until the September meeting, she had emailed Mr Grove before the meeting on 1st July and afterwards on 7th July to relay that SPC were minded to accommodate his request and allow the removal of the oak, provided that Mr Grove undertook to provide a replacement tree of a similar height. However, the clerk expressly stated in that correspondence with Mr Grove, both before and after the meeting, that the replacement chosen by the councillors '*may not be an oak*', as oak trees require a very large space, and would depend on available locations chosen by SPC as being suitable for a new tree. The July minutes state that '*it was agreed that the small oak could be removed by Mr Grove (chopped down rather than dug out to avoid any interference with underground cables) if he undertook to deliver a similar sized tree (2.5m) when the councillors were ready to plant a replacement*'.

At the September meeting, after reviewing suggestions from Councillors and residents for new locations for trees in the parish, the Councillors agreed that there was no suitable alternative place to establish an oak and agreed to ask Mr Grove to purchase one or two small liquidambar trees, which residents had requested for Shackleford Green, to replace the oak he wished to remove. The clerk reported that, after the September meeting, she had obtained quotes from Van Arnhem nursery, and that two small liquidambar trees were of a similar price to a 2.5m oak (although following a site visit by SPC it was established that the oak was in fact 3.5m tall with a 38cm trunk circumference). The clerk emailed Mr Grove to say that the Councillors had now chosen a spot and specimen of tree and to ask if he would be prepared to buy two small liquidambar trees in place of (and at an equivalent cost to) a larger oak. Mr Grove refused to agree and stated that he had only agreed to buy an oak and that although he had received the clerk's emails stating that Councillors might ask for a different type of tree depending on location, he had chosen to '*not respond*' to those parts of the emails.

The clerk and BCM reported that, in light of Mr Grove's refusal and the subsequent dispute, they had contacted him to say that the matter would have to be reconsidered at the November meeting of SPC, as there was clearly no agreement as to the terms of SPC's consent to the removal of the oak. Mr Grove was invited to come to the November meeting to discuss the issue and agree a way forward. It was made clear in correspondence with Mr Grove in emails from the clerk and BCM on 9th, 10th, 12th and 13th October that he should take no further action in respect of the oak until the matter had been considered again by SPC.

BCM reported that, regrettably, Mr Grove had ignored these repeated express requests and a week before the November meeting, had gone onto the Field, without permission, and chopped down the oak. The Councillors expressed disappointment at Mr Grove's action. SPC was under no obligation to accommodate Mr Grove's request, nor turn a blind eye to the damage he had done to the tree and there were concerns that allowing a resident to chop down a tree that they did not like could set a precedent, endangering further trees. Nevertheless, SPC had sought to find a mutually satisfactory compromise, and the Councillors could not understand why Mr Grove had adopted the confrontational position he had, and removed the tree against SPC's specific instructions.

The Councillors also expressed regret at the disproportionate amount of time and SPC resources that had been spent dealing with the issue; and whilst the option remained of pursuing legal remedies this did not seem befitting of SPC. The Councillors asked AS if there was anywhere that a new oak purchased by Mr Grove could be placed on the Field, as this would be the only suitable location for such a large tree in the parish. AS agreed to find a location with BCM and asked the clerk to email Mr Grove to arrange the delivery of an oak tree to him, or Mr Bob Stovold. AS specified, to avoid any confusion, that the 2.5m tree must come from the UK (to avoid disease), be in a container (to ensure it takes well), with guard and two supports and that AS would plant the tree himself, the sooner the better for planting purposes; clerk to email AS and Mr Grove to try to arrange such replacement.

The Councillors agreed that a letter should be sent to Mr Grove outlining: SPC's disappointment at his actions; making clear that he must not go onto to Field without permission again; and confirming that any further damage to any trees on the Field would be reported to the Police without further notice.

AS explained that the Field was home to a large variety of wildlife that he sought to encourage, especially in the field margins, including some rare birds and that as the Field is farmland, it is not open to members of the public who could disturb the habitat of ground-nesting birds and other wildlife. It was agreed that notices be put up at the entrances of the Field to inform members of the public that the Field is farmland and ask that they do not use it for recreational purposes in the hope that the wildlife habitat can be conserved and continue to flourish. It was noted that many residents may not know that the Field was actively managed as farmland/wildlife haven and it was felt that many would be happy to help with this conservation effort once they knew of it. BCM and AS to discuss suitable wording for signs.

43/20 – Planning – the following applications were discussed and clerk to send any comments to GBC

Application	Property	Proposal	SPC VIEWS
20/P/01610	Norney Chase, Elstead Road	Erection of conservatory following demolition of existing conservatory	No objection
20/P/01739	Magnum House	Variation of condition 1 of application 20/P/00297	Councillors objected - new white rendering will be clearly visible and detract from the rural nature and openness of Green Belt

44/20 - Finance**(a) Expenses** – the following were approved and cheques signed where necessary:

Date	Amount	Reason for expenditure	VAT	Payee
1/10/20	£9.95	Website fee	1.66	34SP
1/11/20	£9.95	Website fee	1.66	34SP
09/11/20	£105.40	Clerk's expenses	0	Kate Lingard
9/11/20	£690	Hedge work – new cheque needed as playground hedge added to quote	115	Greenhill

(b) Receipts – the following payment was noted:

Date	Amount	From	Reason
29/9/20	£150	Stovolds	Annual Rent for Cyder House Field

(c) Annual Review of Internal Controls and Documents - the following documents (circulated in advance by Clerk) were signed by the clerk and approved by the Councillors to be signed on their behalf following the meeting:

- (i) **Asset Register as at 31 September 2020**
- (ii) **Bank Reconciliation as at 28 September 2020** – to be signed off by Vice Chair, in accordance with Financial Regulation requirements
- (iii) **Risk Assessment for 2020**
- (iv) **New Code of Conduct** – clerk to send to GBC

45/20 – Other Correspondence - none**46/20 - Next meetings:**

Monday 18 th January	Monday 22 st March
Monday 10 th May (NB THIS DATE WAS CHANGED FROM 17 th MAY)	
Monday 5 th July	Monday 13 th September
Monday 15 th November	DATED 10 November 2020