

Salford Priors Parish Council

Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held in The Memorial Hall, Salford Priors, on Wednesday 20th. April 2011 at 7.30pm.

Present: Councillors, JR Stedman, (Chairman), L Wright, AW Wolfe, DC Penn, RA Francis, L Maude, and A Quiney.

Also in attendance: MJ Philpott, Clerk, County Cllr. P Barnes, District Cllr. B Slaughter, and five members of the public.

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Office and Disclosure of Interests

2.1 Register of Interests: Members were reminded of the need to keep their register of interests up to date.

2.2 Declaration of Interests: Members were reminded that they were required to declare and disclose any personal or prejudicial interests in items on the agenda. Councillors with a prejudicial interest were required to leave the room for the relevant agenda item.

Cllr. Stedman declared a prejudicial interest in Item 5.10 if any discussion were to take place.

3. Open Forum

3.1 The Chairman moved that the meeting be adjourned for Open Forum and this was agreed.

3.2 Have your say: No under 18s were present.

3.3 Public Participation: Mrs Dare said she had examined the lighting report and enquired if the columns in Ban Brook Road were to be removed. She also asked if there would be consultation regarding the lights in St Matthews Close where a lot of old people lived. The Chairman said that further consideration would be given to the lights in Ban Brook Road and the mercury lights which required attention were mainly in Perkins Close. Mrs Littleford accused the Council of tunnel vision and said that taking out lights was destroying everything that made a village modern. She also enquired why the insurance policy was being paid in advance of the June renewal date and why certain areas of School Avenue had not been mown. The Chairman replied that it was normal for insurance premiums to be paid in advance and in respect of the mowing, there was a new contractor and this matter would be looked into.

3.4 Ward Members' Reports Cllr. Barnes gave further information of the process for dealing with planning applications at SDC. The Chairman responded stating that the Parish Council had not been previously made aware that it was necessary for the Clerk to contact the Ward Member in order to trigger a referral to Committee. Cllr. Slaughter said that this was his last meeting. He thanked all concerned for the support he had received during his forty years of service on the District Council. The Chairman said he was particularly grateful for Cllr. Slaughter's help and support and guidance when he first became a councillor and wished him well in his retirement. On behalf of the Council, Cllr. Francis proposed a sincere vote of thanks to Cllr. Slaughter. This was seconded by the Chairman and agreed unanimously. The meeting applauded Cllr. Slaughter.

3.5 The Chairman closed the adjournment at 7.50pm.

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4. Minutes

4.1 The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 16th. March 2011 at 7.30pm at The Memorial Hall, Salford Priors, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Council agreed to consider the Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting at the May meeting.

5. Clerk's Progress Report for consideration by Council**5.1 Support for Bidford library**

The Clerk reported that a letter opposing closure was sent to Warwickshire County Council and copies were circulated to Bidford PC, and County and District ward members. A response had been received in which the librarian has said she will inform us of the criteria used in her analysis.

5.2 Light at Shady Nook

The Clerk had made numerous attempts to contact Keith Matthews to find out what is happening about this pole but without success.

5.3 Gritting of School Road

Correspondence had been exchanged and WCC had agreed to consider the request for School Road to be included in the gritting schedule. Further information was awaited.

5.4 Evesham Road VAS

The 40mph VAS has been repaired and the new 30mph VAS has been placed in position had not yet been connected by EON. The Clerk was asked to chase this with WCC and Cllr. Barnes.

5.5 Mesh to bridge parapet

There has been no progress on this item in spite of having been informed that an order has been placed with the WCC contractor.

5.6 Parking at Dunnington School

The Clerk reported that a further letter had been sent to Katrina Pedlar copied to Cllr. Barnes. Chris Fossey, Road Safety Liaison Officer had replied offering to meet the Council and in view of the Clerk's imminent hospital treatment, Cllr. Wright agreed to arrange a meeting including the head Teacher, Chairman of Governors, Cllrs. Barnes and Maude, and WCC Officers. Cllr. Quiney said that whilst he had not noticed a problem when he drove past in the mornings he could not comment on problems in the afternoon.

5.7 Affordable Housing

Item to be considered at 10.1.

5.8 Bus Shelter at Hedges Close, School Road

The Clerk reported that all matters had been resolved and installation was planned for early July.

5.9 Street signage at Fern Close, Rushford

Cllr. Quiney had been asked to inspect the site and advised that a sign just saying "Fern Close" would be appropriate.

5.10 Planters

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The Clerk noted Cllr. Stedman's declaration of interest but said he would simply report that an order had been placed with the contractor to remove the four planters on Ban Brook Green and at Iron Cross and to restore to grass the Maureen Edmunds bed.

5.11 Speed-aware request for School Road

The Clerk reported that WCC had been informed of the Council's interest and the tests in School Road will be requested following the May meeting.

5.12 Drainage of Broom Lane

The Clerk reported that WCC had agreed to jet the gullies but the other issue was the clearing of the ditches that the gullies run into. The Clerk was asked to write to Ragley and the SDC flood engineer accordingly.

5.13 Street Nameplate, School Avenue

SDC has stated that it is no longer policy to include "leading to" on road signs and they have declined the Council's request to include TOPs and the Playing Field on the sign for School Avenue. SDC suggested a brown finger post sign. The Clerk was asked to explore the provision of this sign with SDC.

5.14 Open land at Dunnington

Steven Lyon of Ragley Estate had informed the Clerk that the land is tenanted and the Council's concerns have been relayed to the tenant. The tenant has assured Mr Lyon that the land will shortly be ploughed and crops planted. Council agreed this matter was now resolved.

5.15 Wooden seat in Churchyard

The Clerk informed the Church Warden of the broken seat in the churchyard, this matter was now resolved.

5.16 Sewerage along B4088

The Chairman reported that the survey has almost been completed and a report will be sent to Severn Trent in June. It will be their decision as to what they wish to do but if they decline to take action there will be an opportunity to appeal to the Environment Agency

6. Planning general

6.1 Letter to Grant Shapps, Minister for Housing and Local Government.

The Clerk confirmed that he had written to the Minister and an acknowledgement had been received that the Council's views regarding planning for trees would be taken into consideration.

6.2 Worcestershire CC, Waste Core Strategy Publication Document

The Clerk reported that the Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire was out to consultation. The Council had made a detailed response to the draft consultation and the comments made then had been addressed in the new document. New developments would generally be located on industrial estates and particularly in the north of the county where the main waste arisings occurred. The county expected to be self sufficient by 2027 for all types of waste. The use of mineral workings would only be allowed where a clear operational relationship was demonstrated. Council decided not to make any further representations.

6.3 Warwickshire CC, Waste Core Strategy, Emerging Spatial Options Consultation

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The Clerk reported that Warwickshire CC had not yet developed a preferred locational strategy; this would be considered later. Sites would be developed where they are close to good transport links and also to major population centres. A series of spatial options were presented, all based on the use of industrial estates, brownfield industrial land, and existing waste management facilities. Council decided not to make any further representations at this stage.

6.4 Emergency Planning Enforcement

The Clerk reported that SDC had set up emergency arrangements for reporting unauthorised encampments during the Spring and Summer Bank Holiday periods. Councillors were circulated with details.

7. New Planning Applications to receive

7.1 11/00370/FUL – Erection of solar panels on flat roof garage at Slatters Mill, Station Road, Salford Priors, Evesham WR11 8UX, for Mr Walter Thomson.

The Clerk reported that, following circulation by e-mail to councillors, a statement of “no representations” had been made to the planning authority.

7.2 11/00599/FUL – Replace existing single storey building with new two storey extension and single storey sun room and new front entrance porch at 28 School Road, Salford Priors, Evesham, WR11 8XD for Mr N Clayton.

The Clerk reported that, following circulation by e-mail to councillors, a statement of “no representations” had been made to the planning authority.

7.3 11/00846/VARY – Removal of condition 4 of planning permission ref. 09/02038/FUL (bedsit to be used as staff accommodation ancillary to the use of the Bell Inn Public House only and not for any residential or holiday let purpose) at The Bell Inn, Evesham Road, Salford Priors, Evesham WR11 8UU for Mr David Atkinson. The Clerk was instructed to use delegated powers to respond to this application taking into account Members’ views supporting the proposal in the interests of helping small businesses.

8. Planning Decisions

Council noted the following planning decision:

8.1 11/00389/FUL – Single storey side extension at 8 Garrard Close, Salford Priors, Evesham, WR11 8XG for Mrs Wendy Goldthorp.

Permission granted

9. Footway Lighting

9.1 Consideration of the outcome of the trial of switching off some of the footway lights.

The Clerk had circulated a report setting out the outcome of the trial and the consequences thereof. A copy of the report is attached to these Minutes as Appendix B.

In introducing the report the Chairman said that the Annual Parish Meeting was the culmination of the switch off trial when he thought the Council would receive a large delegation of parishioners offering solid reasons for the lights to be restored. This was not to be, as almost all comments were aimed at doubting the information that had been received over the last 7 months or questioning the integrity of data that had been considered such as pole ownership. The Chairman said that over the period many residents had expressed support for the switch-off. There had been great concern initially because people’s environment was being changed but he now felt there was a mandate to change. He said that the last seven months had been overwhelming in information gained with very

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many issues having been solved. He considered that the Council was now very well placed to conclude the switch off trial and he urged members not to defer any of the clerk's recommendations but to consider and conclude the current trial and allow the future of the other parish lights to be brought onto the council's agenda in the near future.

The Chairman led the Council through the Clerk's report and Council made the following resolutions:

Council considered the ownership of the poles and concluded that it was almost certain that the poles were the responsibility of the Parish Council; however, the legal ramifications of proving that anyone else other than the Council was liable for the poles was outside the Council's resources and time constraints. Accordingly, Cllr. Wright proposed, Cllr. Wolfe seconded and it was agreed by six votes to one **that the Parish Council does not pursue the ownership issue further.**

Council considered the insurance issue and the letter from AON indicating that public liability insurance could be withdrawn in respect of the wooden poles. The Clerk's request to the insurers to maintain cover whilst the matter was resolved was noted and Cllr. Wolfe proposed, Cllr. Wright seconded and it was agreed unanimously, **that the Parish Council ensures as far as possible that Public Liability insurance is in place at all times for its assets.**

One option that had been considered was that of testing the poles. However, it had proved impossible to find a testing consultant who could certify the future life of the poles and Cllr. Francis proposed, Cllr. Penn seconded and it was agreed unanimously, **that the Parish Council accepts that testing the poles is not a viable option.**

The Parish Council had investigated the possibility of directly replacing the poles but information from Central Networks had shown that the rules for new connections had changed in the 45 years since the lights were originally installed and Cllr. Wright proposed, Cllr. Wolfe seconded and it was agreed unanimously, **that the Parish Council accepts that it is not a practicable option to directly replace the wooden poles and lights.**

The Chairman noted that the Clerk had stated in his report that the council found itself in a situation where it was the owner of certain assets, that is the lights and wooden poles, which were erected some 45 years ago and were now in a derelict state. It was known that some poles were in poor condition and all had been described by Central Networks as "suspect". Also, many of the lights themselves were in poor condition and spares were possibly no longer available. However, the overriding consideration was that the insurers would not continue to provide Public Liability cover for the poles. Testing was not an option, replacement was not a practicable option, the only option was the complete removal of all the poles. Cllr. Wright proposed, Cllr. Francis seconded, and it was agreed unanimously, **that all the wooden poles and lights be removed as soon as possible.**

Regarding the lights on the Ban Brook estate the Chairman said that further consideration should be made in respect of budgets due to the potential high cost of disconnecting and then removing the wooden poles. He suggested that any decision on the Ban Brook lights should be deferred until the conclusion of the wooden pole removal. Furthermore, he said it may be advantageous to consider the whole lighting scheme on the estate as some responders to the questionnaire recommended removal of all the lights. The Chairman proposed, Cllr. Francis seconded, and it was agreed unanimously, **that the decision on the four concrete posts on the Ban Brook estate be suspended pending further investigation.**

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The Chairman referred again to the Clerk's report and said that the Council should see this situation as an opportunity and should plan to consult the whole parish regarding the future of any lighting in the parish. The Council should consider carefully the form of this consultation and ensure that all residents are involved. All options should be considered including the possible use of solar powered lights where appropriate and the use of timers on lights that are retained. The consultation should also include the future of the eight lights in St Matthews Close, and Perkins Close which are mercury lights and are due to be phased out by 2015 under European legislation. The Chairman proposed, Cllr. Wolfe seconded, and it was agreed unanimously, **that the F&GP Group should prepare a detailed plan for the Council to consider and consult parishioners about the future of any lighting in the parish.**

Cllr. Wolfe agreed to prepare a Press Release regarding the decisions made and it was also suggested that an article could be prepared for Clerks & Councils Direct and/or the NALC Newsletter describing the Council's experiences.

9.2 Examination of old Council Minutes.

Council agreed this issue had been fully covered in the Clerk's report.

9.3 Lighting maintenance contract.

Council agreed to negotiate a reactive contract with PD Long together with an agreed list of prices.

10. Housing

10.1 Information from the Rural Housing Enabler

The Chairman referred to the e-mail from the Housing Enabler that had been circulated to all Members and said that the Tothall Lane site was the only one likely to secure funding. Cllr. Quiney asked why sites 4 and 6 had been discounted and the Chairman responded that Members wanted to leave a gap in the village and also that the cost would be excessive. Cllr. Wright expressed concerns regarding the creation of a precedent in extending the village but the Chairman said that the whole point of an Exception Site was that it did not create a precedent. Cllr. Wright asked why the allotments site had been discounted and was informed that this was because of access constraints. Cllr. Wolfe referred to claims of 500 houses being planned for Salford or Bidford in the Local Development Framework but this was dismissed as scare-mongering. The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed unanimously that the Tothall site should be supported.

11. TOPs

11.1 TOPs Constitution

The Clerk reported that the formal Constitution document had now been signed by all parties.

11.2 New doors to main entrance

The Clerk reported that an order had been placed with New Look Conservatories.

11.3 Electricity supply

The Clerk reported that he had contacted U-Switch and obtained a favourable price for electricity supply with EDF Energy that would be paid by monthly direct debit. The new price was almost half the existing price with npower. Council approved the Clerk's action.

12. Playing Field

12.1 Playing Field weekly safety reports.

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The Clerk reported that he had received reports from Cllr. Quiney dated 10.04.11, 3.04.11, 28.03.11, 21.03.11, and 13.03.11. Cllr. Quiney said that the broken glass continued to be a great problem and Cllr. Wolfe suggested photos could be included in the next newsletter. It was suggested that the Youth Club could be shown the photos but Mrs Dare from the floor said that membership was now much younger than previously and might not be able to help identify or influence older children.

12.2 Alterations to the solar lights

The Clerk reported that PD Long had adjusted the lights for British Summertime. Council agreed to defer consideration of changes to the lights to a later meeting.

12.3 Letter to police

The Clerk reported that he had written to Sgt. Moss on 28th. March regarding the drinking by the play area but no response had been received. Council asked the Clerk to write again enclosing copies of the photos. It was also suggested the matter could be taken up at the next Community Forum.

13. Highways

13.1 Quotations for refurbishing the wooden seats

The Clerk informed Council that further quotations had been sought from GTL Services and from PPI. A quotation had been received from GTL and as this was more favourable than the quotation considered at the previous meeting Cllr. Wolfe proposed, Cllr. Maude seconded and it was agreed that an order be placed with GTL services in the sum of £460.

13.2 Letter from SDC regarding highway verge cutting.

The Clerk had circulated a letter from Stratford DC indicating that they were reducing the frequency of grass cutting in the District each year over the next three years. This would affect the mowing grant payment made to the Parish Council.

13.3 Road damage in School Road

The Clerk was asked to write again to WCC regarding the subsidence over a foul water drain in School Road at the Elms.

13.4 Temporary Traffic Lights in Station Road

The Chairman asked the Clerk to write to WCC regarding the temporary traffic lights in Station Road that had been periodically broken down for long periods of time over a weekend causing great disruption. It was proposed that Parish Councils should be sent copies of licences issued to companies supplying temporary lights and the contact numbers of the highways officer in charge issued for emergency use.

14. Village Fete

14.1 Report by the Cllr. Quiney

Cllr. Quiney said there had been good attendance at the Fete Committee. There would be 50 stalls, displays, and events including a fly past by a Dakota aircraft. The Committee had requested that the grass be cut and collected before the event and also that a raffle prize should be provided. In response to a question from the Chairman Mrs Dare said that any profit from the event would be saved towards a big event for the Diamond Jubilee in 2012. The raffle prize and grass collecting will be considered at the next Council meeting.

15. Communications

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15.1 Letter to Richard Dare, Clerk to report.

The Clerk reported that, in accordance with the Council's instructions, he had thanked Richard Dare for his help in developing the website. Cllr. Maude said he had been tidying up the site and making additions as necessary; he asked councillors to provide suggestions for additional content on the web site.

16. Rights of Way**16.1 Report from the Rights of Way Inspector.**

Cllr. Quiney said he had nothing to report.

16.2 Footpath at Wood Bevington Lane.

The Clerk reported that he had written to Vicarage Nurseries together with a photograph regarding the obstruction to the footpath. A reply was awaited and Cllr. Quiney was asked to inspect.

17. Matters raised by Councillors

17.1 Councillors are invited to use this opportunity to report minor matters of information not included elsewhere on the Agenda and to raise items for future agendas. Councillors are respectfully reminded that this is not an opportunity for debate or decision making.

17.2 Cllr. Francis referred to a dip in the footpath between 42 and 48 School Road and the Clerk was asked to inspect.

18. Consideration of Correspondence Received**18.1 WALC Newsletter, ADH\93 March 2011**

Council noted the information provided.

18.2 WALC Training Courses.

Council noted the information provided.

19. To Table

Nothing to table.

20. Finance**20.1 Consideration and approval of the payments and transfers listed in Appendix A.**

Council noted the income transactions in Appendix A1.

Council noted the payments made between meetings on 13.04.11 in Appendix A2, and approved the action taken.

Council considered the expenditure transactions listed in Appendix A3. Authorisation for payment was proposed by Cllr. Maude, seconded by Cllr. Wolfe, and carried. Cheques were signed by Cllr. Wright and Cllr. Quiney.

Council noted the bank transfer made between meetings on 14.04.11 in Appendix A4, and approved the action taken.

20.2 Annual Accounts

The Clerk reported that the Annual Accounts had been delivered to the Internal Auditor on 6.04.11. He further reported that the Employer Annual Return had been submitted to HMRC on 19.04.11.

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The Chairman asked the Clerk to bring the Insurance Schedule, Asset Register, and Risk Assessment to the next meeting. Council agreed that the Financial Regulations should be reviewed by the F&GP Group.

9.1 Continued – Quotations for removal of lighting poles

Cllr. Stedman proposed, Cllr. Wright seconded and it was agreed that:

“In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest, as if members of the public were present during the consideration of such business, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under paras 1 and 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw”.

The Clerk had circulated a report describing the four quotations received from six requests to tender for the removal of the wooden poles. Two contractors declined to tender and from the four who had tendered, Roger Small was the preferred contractor.

The Clerk confirmed that Roger Small had produced all the necessary documentation including equipment to be used, public liability insurance, and experience of working on highways. Cllr. Wright proposed, Cllr. Wolfe seconded, and it was agreed unanimously, that the quotation from Roger Small be accepted.

In view of the Clerk’s impending knee surgery on the following day Council agreed that this work should be put in hand immediately under the direction of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

21. Date of Next Meetings

Council confirmed the date of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at 7.30pm on Wednesday 18th. May 2011 in the Memorial Hall, Salford Priors.

Council confirmed the date of the next Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council at 7.45pm* on Wednesday 18th. May 2011 in the Memorial Hall, Salford Priors. (* to follow the Annual Meeting)

22. Closure of meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.45pm.

Signed.....

Date.....

APPENDIX A – Finance**A1 Income transactions for approval**

Tn. No.	Cheque	Gross	Vat	Net	Details
6462		150.00	0.00	150.00	TOPs Mgt. Committee, Service Charge, 1.10.10 – 31.12.10
6463		52.00	0.00	52.00	Mrs ME Allison, Allotment rent Plot 3
6464		50.00	0.00	50.00	Mrs ME Allison, Allotment deposit Plot 3
Total		£252.00	£0.00	£252.00	

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A2 Expenditure transactions approved between meetings on 13.04.11

Tn. No.	Cheque	Gross	Vat	Net	Details
8686	dd	18.99	2.83	16.16	Plusnet, Office Broadband
8687	102383	190.52	0.00	190.52	Stratford DC, TOPs Business rates
8688	102384	141.62	23.60	118.02	Staples, Stationery
8689	102385	190.00	0.00	190.00	Aden Pest Control, moles.
8690	102386	408.00	0.00	408.00	WALC Annual subscription
8691	102387	76.78	12.78	64.00	BT, Office phone
8692	102388	60.00	0.00	60.00	Michael Hyde, deliver Newsletters
8693	102389	270.00	45.00	225.00	Hightrees LS, mowing contract
8694	102390	879.41	143.79	735.62	npower, TOPs electricity
8695	102391	23.94	3.99	19.95	MJ Philpott, Land Registry plan
8696	102392	35.00	0.00	35.00	The Information Commissioner, Data Protection Act
8697	102393	48.00	8.00	40.00	PD Long, adjust solar light
8698	102394	275.32	45.89	229.43	Digital Copier Services, office photocopier
8699	102395	536.90	0.00	536.90	MJ Philpott, Clerk's salary April
8700	102401	3676.01	0.00	3676.01	AON Insurance Premium
8701	102402	487.85	81.05	406.80	npower, footway lighting power
Total		£7318.34	£362.94	£6955.40	

A3 Expenditure transactions for approval

Tn. No.	Cheque	Gross	Vat	Net	Details
8702	102403	145.75	0.00	145.75	Warwickshire CC, TOPs lease
Total		£145.75	£0.00	£145.75	

A4. Transfers

Transfer from No.1 account to Community account approved between meetings £7000.00
Approved by Chairman and Cllr. Wright on 13.04.11.

A5. Account Balances at 12.04.11

Community a/c	£2,399.59
No.1 a/c	£30,716.14
No.3 a/c	£213.88

APPENDIX B**SALFORD PRIORS PARISH COUNCIL****Meeting to be held on 20th. April****Item 9.1 FOOTWAY LIGHTS****INTRODUCTION**

The Parish Council switched off nearly half of the footway lights in September last year. It stated that this was for a trial period to last until April 2011 when the outcome of the trial would be considered. Since September 2010 many issues have had to be examined and this report sets out the conclusions we have now reached.

OWNERSHIP OF THE WOODEN LIGHTING POLES

We cannot be 100 per cent certain, but our discussions with Central Networks and BT Openreach indicate that they are owned by the Parish Council. The poles do not show on Central Networks maps and they do not have BT physical markings on them. We understand from a Councillor in a nearby parish that their poles were installed by Midlands Electricity Board and given to the parish. This seems to be the most plausible explanation for the origin of the poles.

Searching through old Minute books is most unlikely to produce anything useful. Even if it did show that the poles originally were installed by a long gone electricity company no useful purpose would be served by this. The legal costs of proving that anyone else other than the Parish Council is liable for the poles and the time to get an outcome would be far beyond the resources of the Parish Council.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that the Parish Council does not pursue the ownership issue further. If any resident wishes to travel to the Records Office and inspect the old Minute Books then that is a matter for them.

INSURANCE

The Parish Council holds an insurance policy with AON/Allianz. Under the terms of this policy the Council is obliged to disclose any information that may affect the policy. Accordingly, the Council had to inform AON that Central Networks had declared all the wooden lighting poles “suspect” and that our own inspection had shown that the tops of some poles were rotted.

AON have responded indicating that public liability insurance could be withdrawn from the Council in respect of the wooden poles. Under the terms of insurance law it is believed that this would apply from the renewal date of 1.06.11. This is a critical situation for the Council because if public liability insurance was to be removed and someone was injured the funds of the Council would be wiped out and the costs would fall to the council tax payers of the parish.

In our latest letter to our insurers we have explained that we do need to manage the situation either by removing the poles completely or by testing each pole individually. We have said that it is absolutely crucial to us that we can be assured that they will continue to provide us with Public Liability insurance cover on all these poles whilst this process is on-going. We have indicated that we would be prepared to agree a sensible time table for the necessary work and have asked AON if they will maintain our Public Liability insurance during this period.

It is RECOMMENDED that the Parish Council ensures that Public Liability insurance is in place at all times for its assets.

TESTING

The possibility of testing the poles has been explored. BT Openreach inspect their poles every 10 years but do not provide this service for third parties. Also, major companies such as BT will self-insure and are able to carry risks that a very small organisation such as the Parish Council cannot. It has not proved possible to identify an independent company able to inspect and certify the integrity of the poles. In this search we have consulted trade associations and major testing companies. We found a company, Utility Technology Limited, who would inspect the poles and report on their condition but they could not give any guarantee as to their future life. Testing would be likely to cost about £3000 and to be of any use we would require a guarantee for a period of at least 5 years. We therefore consider that testing is not a practical option.

It is RECOMMENDED that the Parish Council accepts that testing the poles is not a viable option.

REPLACEMENT OF THE POLES

Direct replacement is not a straightforward option. Central Networks, has confirmed that “they would prefer to supply new connections from an underground network to avoid future inspection, maintenance, and fault repairs if it was technically possible and made economic sense. Where possible, Central Networks would prefer not to provide new connections from apparatus located on third party land as they would need to secure wayleaves and consents which might be terminated at some future time leaving Central Networks with the costs of diverting their apparatus.” This means that every pole that we might wish to replace will be subject to a separate design and cost assessment and this will be dependent on the location and type of their most convenient network point. Generally, replacement connections will have to be by an underground cable to a network pole and not by an overhead line to a nearby house as is the current situation. At £50 per metre for an underground cable the cost for each light will be very high.

It is RECOMMENDED that the Parish Council accepts that it is not a practicable option to directly replace the poles and lights.

CONCLUSION

The Council finds itself in a situation where it is the owner of certain assets, that is the lights and wooden poles, which were erected some 45 years ago and are now in a derelict state. We know that some poles are in poor condition and all have been described by Central Networks as “suspect”. Also, many of the lights themselves are in poor condition and spares are no longer available. However, the over-riding consideration is that our insurers will not continue to provide Public Liability cover for the poles. Testing is not an option, replacement is not a practicable option, the only option is the complete removal of all the poles.

It is RECOMMENDED that all the wooden poles and lights be removed as soon as possible.

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BAN BROOK ESTATE LIGHTING

Four concrete posts are still considered to need replacing. These are No.31, 7 Ban Brook Road; No.35, 40 Ban Brook Road; No.38, 1 Sanders Road; and No. 39, 9 Garrard Close. A questionnaire was circulated to residents living close to these lights and a small majority of respondents considered these lights could be removed. However, only 30 per cent of residents responded.

It is RECOMMENDED that the four concrete posts on the Ban Brook estate be removed.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The Council should see this situation as an opportunity and should plan to consult the whole parish regarding the future of any lighting in the parish. The Council should consider carefully the form of this consultation and ensure that all residents are involved. All options should be considered including the possible use of solar powered lights where appropriate and the use of timers on lights that are retained. The consultation should also include the future of the eight lights in St Matthews Close, and Perkins Close which are mercury lights and are due to be phased out by 2015 under European legislation.

It is RECOMMENDED that the Parish Council prepare a detailed plan to consult the whole parish regarding the future of any lighting in the parish.

M J Philpott
Clerk