

**Minutes of the Meeting of Froxfield & Privett Parish Council
held at Froxfield Village Hall on
Thursday 21st September 2023 at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr David Rymer, Cllr Teresa Brown, Cllr John Ellis, Cllr Peter Doyle, Cllr Chris Skinner, Cllr Phoebe Hiscock and Cllr Vanessa Christie. **In attendance:** County Cllr Russell Oppenheimer, District Cllr Nick Drew, the Clerk and 3 members of the public.

- 1. Apologies for absence** Apologies were received from Cllr Pitman
- 2. Approval of the minutes of Thursday 3rd August 2023** were approved and signed
- 3. Matters Arising**
- 4. Declarations of Pecuniary Interests** None declared
- 5. Comments from the Public or Press**
 - a. A resident present voiced his concern about motorcycles being driven along Old Stoner/Old Coach Road BOAT as though they were on a motocross track. The north side of the BOAT is an SSSI. These motorcycles are causing damage to the SSSI/woodlands by leaving the track, racing up the side of the hanger, circumnavigating a tree and returning to the track. He added that no one minds if people use the byways carefully, but significant destruction occurs to the SSSI/woodlands/National Park and noise issues occur when drivers do otherwise.
 - b. The owners of Soal Pond Cottage were invited by the PC to attend the meeting in order to present a short synopsis of their thoughts and intentions regarding Soal Pond, which is positioned directly adjacent to Soal Pond Cottage.

Jody and Kate Ashfield (“the Ashfields”) purchased the property from the Graham-Clarks in 2019 and during the course of the purchase learnt much about the adjacent pond from the Graham-Clarke’s daughter, Jane who was brought up in the cottage.

Members heard that during their ownership of Soal Pond Cottage, over 5 and a half decades, the Graham-Clarks regularly carried out maintenance works on the pond and over the years created an island and promontory without objection.

County Cllr Oppenheimer explained that Hampshire Highways, who, whilst not the owners of the land, have control over the land and the pond and regard it as a Highway’s asset. The Ashfields speculated that this may have led to local assumption that the land and pond was in fact owned by the County Council however it remains unregistered.

When the Ashfields bought the property they opened dialogue with Hampshire County Council, specifically Mark Housby, Highways Asset Information Manager and were advised to carry on as their predecessors had. The Ashfields said it was on this basis that they proceeded to reline the pond to ensure it held water, remove rubble and rubbish from the area, cutback overgrown and non-native plants and replace the crumpled and dishevelled CC road safety barrier made of concrete posts and rails with a cleft oak post and rail fence.

The Ashfields confirmed that they are conscious the pond is of local, ecological and historical importance and is considered by many as a public amenity and with this in mind it is their intention to continue to care and nurture the pond and replace non-native plant species (namely the Spiraea along the highway which was planted by the Graham-Clarks which has received complaints) with more suitable and native varieties consistent with that

which would be common around a pond edge and importantly control the same such that the amenity can be appreciated by everyone. Furthermore, The Ashfields were delighted to confirm that the pond now provides a successful breeding ground for a plethora of newts and frogs and is teeming with life again.

Members went on to question the Ashfields regarding direct access and how this could be achieved with the existing fencing arrangements. One member recalled ‘dipping’ in the pond in hot summers as a child. The Ashfields advised that the new fence followed the previous fence line and so they had replaced ‘like for like’. This would be reviewed as members thought that access used to be by way of a gap at the end of the road safety barrier on the west side of the pond which is confirmed by available imagery from Google Maps. The Ashfields advised that they had taken images throughout the time of their ownership, prior to the restoration work undertaken and would be happy to share these with Members.

The Chairman concluded debate and comment by summarising what he thought to be the salient points of concern as submitted by various residents.

- The dilapidated concrete post and steel rail fencing had been removed which had been originally erected by Hampshire County Council as a road safety measure (although this has not been confirmed) had been removed and replaced with a wooden post and cleft rail fence which by nature would not be as robust as the old fence.
 - The same timber fencing had been erected between the highway and the pond and around the part of the garden curtilage which suggested to many that the pond and immediate surrounds is in the ownership of the cottage and not an asset for all to enjoy. This thought was further cemented by the fact that in carrying out remediation works older soft landscaping between the cottage and the pond had been rationalised meaning that there is no apparent boundary between the two elements
 - Concern had been expressed that the PC assumed responsibility over the management of the pond, but this is not the case. The PC has no vested interest whatsoever in the pond or the surrounding land albeit that it would like to assist in the protection of the asset for all to enjoy.
 - There is some concern that by fencing off the pond and surrounding land that adverse possession might be claimed.
6. **To consider whether to lobby Damian Hinds MP on the Government’s proposal to end the installation of fossil fuel heating in off-gas grid homes from 2026.** A resident concerned that after 2026, or the new date set by the PM the previous day, homeowners would be unable to replace oil fired boilers. Air and ground source work better with well insulated houses but many houses are old and difficult to insulate well. It was felt that this proposal was a slight on rural communities whereas there is a longer the deadline for the areas with gas being mostly urban. It was agreed that Cllrs Brown and Christie would pen a letter to Damian Hinds.
7. **Update on the Auto SpeedWatch Scheme** in Cllr Pitman’s absence the Clerk reported the scheme had raised considerable interest from Town and Parish Councils. The County Council is working with their legal department to produce a licence for ASW applications. Subsequently, the PC had received confirmation that this was all but ready and would proceed with submitting the documents when given to go-ahead. Cllr Drew said that applications already received by EHDC will be honoured.
8. **County Councillor’s Report** Councillor Russell Oppenheimer highlighted some aspects of his monthly report.
- a. Members were asked to look at the County Council’s Consultation on the future of Care homes

- b. Two further consultations on planning reform were launched recently by the Government. The first on changes to plan-making. This will make the process quicker and will require planning authorities to review plans every five years. The second on changes to Permitted Development, including within protected landscapes. This consultation covers changes to certain permitted development rights that allow agricultural diversification and development on agricultural units. The SDNPA is not very happy about this proposal. He suspected there will be mixed views amongst Parish Councillors.
- c. On the HCC website there is a helpful new page which lists emergency contact numbers for a range of different organisations.
- d. The Pullen's Lane traffic calming project is the largest in Hampshire. There is a need to slow down the speed of traffic. The central section will be 20mph.
- e. Footpaths in Ropley and West Tisted will be closed until mid-November to allow for works in connection with the Esso pipeline from London to Southampton.
- f. Members would be welcome at the Energise South Downs Forum at Bedales School on Friday 6th October.
- g. Updating on BOATs Cllr Oppenheimer said there was a new ROW manager, Jonathon Wood at HCC and the new strategy is working towards gates, notice boards and permanent closures.

9. District Councillor's Report

- a. Cllr Drew asked if the PC was aware of the new Farnborough Tag Consultation which is at present open for comment. He said that flights will increase by 400% from private planes not business jets.
- b. Hurst Lane planning application, the inspectorate had found in favour of the DC. Cllr Drew had thanked the enforcement team for securing this success. Cllr Rymer asked if there was any timescale attached to the removal of the buildings. Cllr Drew would find out this information.
- c. The PC can submit a request for the planning committee to determine the planning application for Quin Hay Farm.
- d. After the necessary removal of ash trees from Stoner Hill, Cllr Drew made it clear there would be funding available for planting new trees. Cllr Oppenheimer responded that County would be undertaking tree planting, but he would be happy to talk to the PC on planting other sites.
- e. A huge amount of work had gone into the Village Hall Garden Party. He thanked the large number of residents who had sponsored the day.

10. The Safeguarding for Children and Vulnerable Adults Policies were approved and duly adopted.

11. Annual Insurance Renewal It was agreed to continue with Zurich Municipal Insurance whose premium had not increased from last year and the limits of indemnities were consistent with 2022.

12. Future Meeting Dates It was agreed that the Parish Council Meetings will now be held on the first Thursday of the month and the Planning Committee Meetings on the 3rd Thursday of the month.

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