**DRAFT POULTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7th JULY 2024**

**AT 7 PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Cllr. Simon Collyer-Bristow (Chair)

Ed Hyslop (Vice Chair)

 Cllr. Chris Davies

 Cllr. Tom Gillibrand

 Cllr. Lisa Spivey (County & District Councillor)

 Mrs. Heather Harris (Clerk)

No members of the public attended the meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence.**

PCSO Bulbul sent his apologies, he had been asked to attend the meeting in regard to item 6 on the Agenda.

1. **Approval of Minutes of meeting held on the 8th July 2024 and matters arising.**

The Minutes of the previous meeting were signed by the Chair.

1. **County Councillor’s Report.**

Flash flooding this autumn

There was an extraordinary amount of rainfall in September. Gloucestershire received more than 3 times the usual levels of rainfall and our highways teams experienced more than 3 times the number of out-of-hours callouts.

Our proactive approach to drain clearing means that most flash flooding on roads drains away quickly. We can clearly see the ground is already very saturated and the water table level is very high, so further rainfall this winter is very likely to cause flash flooding in areas we wouldn’t usually expect to see it.

Every year we clear more than 130,000 drains across the county. Each drain is cleared at least once and some more often. We also carry out reactive clearing operations in response to reports. To prepare for a particularly wet winter please familiarise yourself with the Flood Guide on our website which offers lots of help and advice on preparing and dealing with flooding.

Residents can help to remove autumn leaves from blocked drains (if it is safe to do so) and add the leaves to compost or a garden waste bin. Otherwise, blocked drains can be reported online with Fix My Street.

We can all help when flash flooding occurs by keeping informed of [https://road%20closures/]road closures, not driving through flooded roads or moving signage which is there to protect road users and staying up to date with news on our social media channels – on Facebook and X (Twitter).

Reminder for landowners responsible for ditches and watercourses

Someone who owns property which is next to a watercourse or has a watercourse running through it, is called a ‘riparian landowner’. Legally, riparian landowners have certain rights and responsibilities relating to the stretch of watercourse that flows through or alongside their land. It is not only farmers who are riparian owners.

Homeowners may not realise that the ditch at the bottom of their garden belongs to them and that they may be responsible for its maintenance.

The legal responsibilities to help manage flood risk and protect the environment include:

1. To maintain the watercourse and to clear any obstructions (natural or otherwise) so the optimum flow of water is not impeded.

2. To maintain the banks and bed of the watercourse (including any trees and shrubs growing on the banks) and any flood defences that exists on it.

3. To accept the natural flow from your upstream neighbour and transfer it downstream without obstruction, pollution or diversion.

4. To maintain any approved structures on your stretch of the watercourse. For further information please read about riparian responsibilities in the Flood Guide: What are the responsibilities of a riparian owner? | Gloucestershire County Council

Build Back Better

Final, final call for any projects that could use Build Back Better funding. I have a small amount of money to allocate before the scheme ends in January 2025, so please get in touch if your community could do with some extra funding for a specific, community enhancing project.

Highways Local

I have now allocated all of the money from my annual highways local budget to a variety of small issues across the division which either wouldn’t happen at all or have been delayed due to other priorities in the Local Highways manager’s work programme. The final allocation I have made is to carry out important CCTV surveys in Cerney Wick, Siddington, South Cerney and Harnhill which are needed in order to progress solutions for long standing flooding issues. I have also allocated money to ensure that further safety enhancements are carried out at the crossroads between South Cerney/Siddington/Kemble/Somerford Keynes road which has seen a spate of crashes and near misses in recent times.

I have already used some of this pot to fund re-surfacing and patching work in other areas as well as booking the community gang to do some tidying of verges and general cleaning.

Highways Maintenance Contract

The highways maintenance contract is currently being reviewed and it is most likely that the current contractor, Ringway, will be awarded a contract extension. I was unhappy with the way this was being pushed through without any consultation with members or scrutiny so following my “call-in” of the cabinet decision, an extraordinary meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee was held at the end of October. I am asking the administration to re-think how it delivers this service before binding the council into another 4 years with this failing contractor. Most of the correspondence I receive from residents is to do with poor highways repairs, damage to vehicles and general dissatisfaction with the roads. So, time to re-think this contract worth £430M.

Motions at Full Council – 6th November 2024

Civic Pride

The Lib Dem group proposed a motion about promoting Civic Pride in our county. For far too long we have seen a cutting and cutting of basic maintenance like road sign cleaning and repairs, diversion signs dumped in verges, verges not cut back or kept clear, and graffiti sprayed on lampposts and other street furniture. We have asked Cabinet to look at establishing a team to go around fixing all of these small things which make such a big difference. We have also asked to explore setting up a “best street/play area” award so that communities, parishes and districts can work with the county council to take pride in their local area and celebrate success.

Winter Fuel Payments

Our group also proposed a motion asking the County Council to do whatever it can to support those who will be affected by the removal of the winter fuel allowance. I know that this can be of particular concern in rural areas where we are often not on main grid for energy supply and housing stock is old and sometimes poorly insulated. Our ask is that we

use the Household Support Fund to extend help and also to make sure that all those who may be eligible for pension credit are aware and make a claim. If you know anyone who might be affected or need support, please do let me know and I can ensure they are given the right information and support this winter.

1. **District Councillor’s Report.**

Cost of living Support

We are acutely aware that although inflation has fallen, there are still many people who are facing hardship and with higher prices now baked in, many residents are struggling with the general cost of living. We continue to work closely with partners like the Citizens Advice Bureau to offer whatever help we can in accessing support. A leaflet has gone out in the post to those most at risk and our website contains information for those who need help.

Cabinet took the decision on the 7th November to extend the Council Tax Relief scheme which should avoid “cliff edges” for those requiring financial support.

Transformation

On the 1st November, the first tranche of staff was transferred back to Cotswold District Council having been part of the teckal company Publica shared by Cotswold District Council. Forest of Dean District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council since its formation in 2017.

Although this shouldn’t make any difference to residents, it is seen as a positive move for each council to have more control over its services, how they are staffed and financed and will allow each individual organisation to provide services in the best way for their local communities.

Staff coming back to the direct employ of Cotswold District Council include democratic services, elections, communications and planning.

Flood Warden Scheme - Are you interested in helping your community prepare for, respond to and recover from flooding events?

We are looking to recruit Flood Wardens as part of our Flood Warden scheme with the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC).

This couldn’t be more important as you will see from the section below.

Full training and support will be provided. For more information, or to register your interest, please email rachels@grcc.org.uk

Unsung Heroes

The Council launched its Unsung Hero award scheme with the first recipients receiving their awards at the full Council meeting at the end of September. We are keen to recognise those amazing members of our communities who always go above and beyond, often without any fuss or fanfare. Is there someone you would like to nominate? Someone who always goes the extra mile in your community. Find out more below with a link to make a nomination. This isn’t about major awards, just a chance to say a heartfelt “thank you”.

https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/local-heroes-to-be-recognised-for-their-contributions-to-the-community?mc\_cid=0022bb1e92&mc\_eid=be184b2790

Housing Policy

The quota for the Cotswolds will be in the region of 542-965 new homes. There will be huge amounts of growth around Cirencester and Moreton in Marsh. Treatment works need to be updated to cope with the extra demand.

Cllr. Hyslop asked if housing should be permitted after infrastructure had been updated.

Cllr. Spivey responded that this would be the preferred strategy and that doubling the housing quota will be a big local issue.

District Council Offices

Cllr. Spivey said that 35% of the Trinity Road site was now available for rental.

The Chair asked what the fiscal status was of the Councils.

Cllr. Spivey reported that money was send in one-year settlements however, Labour have said that they will be moving to two-year settlements and that Council Tax will increase by the maximum amount. She also said that there is a business rate re-set coming; currently at £3.5-5M but may be reduced. She reported that inflation had taken a bit hit.

Cllr. Davies asked about Council Tax for second homes.

Cllr. Spivey responded that there will be a 100% surcharge in April 2025.

Cllr. Davies asked if the Flooding forum would be continuing.

Cllr Spivey confirmed that they would but in a different format with Roz Savage MP.

The Chair thanked Cllr. Spivey for her support with funding, £13k from Cotswold District Council and also monies from the Build Back Better fund at Gloucestershire County Council, both of which made a big difference to the playground project.

The Chair asked what the Council’s position was regarding solar farms and she responded that Cotswold District Council will encourage green energy and will be supporting the community.

Cllr. Davies raised his concern that agricultural land was being used for green energy rather than food security.

Cllr. Spivey said that national policy was needed. She said that locally the cost was prohibitive, and that community payback should be part of any development. There should be localised energy generation and consumption.

1. **Financial Report.**

Payments received into the Current account as at 14/10/25:

Spacehive (playground fundraising) £19446.03

Cotswold District Council (precept) £2,500

Payments made from the Current account:

GoDaddy (website) £143.86

HMRC (PAYE) 160.00

Clerk’s Wages (April-October) 640.00

Balances: £

Current account 9049.25

#1 Deposit account 4838.79

#2 Deposit account 33110.96

A transfer of £19446.03 was made from the current account to the #2 deposit account (playground fundraising monies).

Cllr. Hyslop said that the playground costs would be £26,643 net.

1. **Reported Crimes within the Village.**

PCSO Bulbul sent the following report:

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| **Crime comparison statistics for Poulton parish****1st July 2024 to 30 Sep 2024**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Home Office Crime Band | Crime 01Jul2024 – 30Sep2024 | Crime 01Jul2023 – 30Sep2024 | +/- |
| Violence | 2 | 2 |  |
| Sexual Offences | 0 | 0 |  |
| Robbery | 0 | 0 |  |
| Burglary | 1 | 0 | +1 |
| Theft | 1 | 1 |  |
| Criminal Damage | 2 | 0 | +2 |
| Drugs | 0 | 0 |  |
| Other notifiable offences | 0 | 0 |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Total | 6 | 3 | +3 |

* Burglaries-These have not been specific to Poulton and are part of an OCG (Organised Criminal Groups) targeting the Cotswolds.
* There have been a number of collisions involving walls being knocked down in the village. It is suspected that alcohol was a key factor and not speed alone.
* The GCC (Gloucestershire County Council) collision map is not showing any injury collisions since 2022.
* The village has recently installed Community Speed Cameras which will help reduce speed.
* Since the burglaries the Local Neighbourhood Policing Team have increased patrols in the area, carried out a PIP (Police Information Point), carried out house to house enquiries and offered crime prevention.
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Cllr. Spivey said that she will be attending the Cotswold Community Safety Partnership meeting on Wednesday and would raise the Council’s concerns.

The Chair said that the increase in crimes within rural areas is concerning.

Cllr. Spivey reassured the Council that the Cotswold is still one of the safest areas in the UK.

Cllr. Davies said that people need to take some personal responsibility by not having belongings on show in parked vehicles. He also said that crimes go in phases and CCTV signs act as a deterrent.

1. **Speeding and Traffic Report.**

50 speeding letters were sent out in July to offenders. The Police have access to all the data collected by the camera.

Three new speed camera signs are arriving shortly and will be placed at the entrances to the village and by the War Memorial. Signage for the average speed cameras will be placed on the London Road.

The cost of the posts, cameras and signs will be £3,500 and will be installed in the November-December batch.

1. **Report on Drainage Meeting.**

Cllr. Davies attended the drainage meeting on behalf of the Council. He has given the names of the riparian owners and requested clearance of the brook.

1. **Report on Playground refurbishment.**

The new equipment has been installed and is proving very popular.

The remedial works will be completed in the spring and Cllr. Hyslop is hopeful of a goodwill reduction due to the installation problems and errors.

The Chair thanked Cllrs. Hyslop and Gillibrand for all their hard work with the playground refurbishment. The Council also thanked Gary who lives in West View for his help during the works.

The Clerk was asked to contact Willow Gardening Services regarding new maintenance instructions from the manufacturer.

1. **Any Other Business.**

Poulton Playing Field & Allotment Charity – Cllr. Davies reported that the Cricket Club have still not signed the terms of agreement and there is no proper lease. The Trustees need to pay for a Solicitor to complete this.

Cricklade Street parking – The Clerk reported that cars were being parked in Cricklade Street on a Sunday morning which impeded the thoroughfare of agricultural vehicles. The Chair will speak to the Churchwardens regarding this.

Casual Vacancy – The Chair said that he will approach a few new people in the village to see if there is any interest in joining the Council.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 9th December at 7pm.