

Minutes of an Extra-ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 29th January 2024 in Charvil Village Hall at 8pm

Present Pat Sutlieff, Matt Walker, Jane Hartley, Narinder Ryatt, Rob Jones, Lee Cripps, and Stephen Lucas

Apologies for Absence Isabelle Bray

Absent

24/8249 Open Forum

One resident and the assistant clerk attended.

24/8250 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

24/8251 To consider and approve the proposal from Wokingham Borough Council to solve the sinkhole impasse

The chair explained that she and the clerk had met with the leader of the Borough Council and the Assistant Director for Estates and Property, and that they had put forward a proposal to share the repair costs of the sinkhole, including fencing, surveying to find the cause and extent; and the repair itself.

Since then, the Council has received the finer detail in writing in the form of notes from the meeting, and a letter from the leader of the Council, to which the Chair of the Parish is expected to reply. This is, to all intents and purposes, the agreement the Council needs to approve.

The Council approved the general approach, as they felt this was a pragmatic way forward.

It was suggested having a cap on the costs of £50k each, which should be over-generous given that the initial costs were expected to be around £20k. If it seems that the solution will be more than that, then both sides need to re-affirm their agreement. This was agreed. It was also agreed that the Council wants to limit its financial involvement to areas leased by the Parish – so it will not pay for surveys done on wholly Wokingham property and on school land.

They were also grateful that the Borough would be willing to let the Parish pay back in stages, with payments in the first 12 months being interest free, but that the starting point of the twelve-month period needs to be confirmed. It was also agreed that it was pragmatic for Volker Highways to do the work, rather than the Parish having to go out to tender, as this should accelerate the speed of the repair.

They accepted that this agreement is for this instance only and that it does not set precedence for liability going forwards.

They also accepted that legal involvement as to the responsibility for the hole should cease at this point.

The Council would like full sight of any reports, and full disclosure of any information received by the Borough regarding the hole and its causes, and to be kept informed at all points, with at least fortnightly updates, and a day-to-day contact.

They would also like it noted that the repair must optimise safety above all else, and that we must clarify who will take responsibility for the repair once it has been completed – that is, who will affirm it is indeed safe before the facility is re-opened.

The Council also delegated authority to the clerk to agree to further expenditure up to the £50k cap, providing she keeps the Council informed of these decisions.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.56pm

Chairman's Signature