

FRESHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Freshford Parish Council 08 April 2024, 7pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall

Parish Councillors Present: Elli Bate (Chair), Jennifer Clamp, Jessie Forbes, John Putt

Apologies: John Adler, Julian Carpenter

In attendance: Selina Jobson (Parish Clerk)

Members of the Public: Nine

169. **Chair**

In the absence of the Chair, Cllr Bate agreed to Chair the meeting.

170. **Declarations of Interests and Requests for Dispensations**

None.

171. **Minutes of Meeting**

Resolved: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024 as a true record.

172. **Matters Arising**

None.

173. **Open Forum**

Eight residents were attending to raise concerns about the decision to remove the temporary matting from the paths on The Tynning.

Cllr Bate explained the background to the Parish Council's decision to remove the matting in Spring 2024. The matting had been installed in 2020 as a temporary measure to assist the School with social distancing during Covid, but had been needed for longer than expected. This meant that the original plan, for volunteers to remove the matting before it became too embedded, had not been possible. When deciding to remove the matting, environmental and cost impacts had been considered along with residents' views, both for and against the removal of the matting. Recently, a number of residents had contacted the Parish Council against the removal of the matting and these views had been considered by all councillors. The contractor had not yet been able to schedule a date to undertake the removal of the matting, and the time of year when re-seeding the path could be successfully undertaken was coming to an end.

Residents made the following comments:

- A resident outlined legal, financial and environmental considerations which he felt must be taken into account when deciding the future of the matting.
- That whilst there were concerns about the environmental impact of leaving the plastic matting on The Tynning, the environmental impact of removing and landfilling the plastic matting should also be considered.
- That the project could be undertaken in a two-phased approach: to remove some of the matting (e.g. the lower path) and to replace the remaining matting (the upper path) with a more durable solution. This would enable the community to see the impact of removing part of the matting and re-seeding this path.
- That the use of The Tynning had changed in recent years and the whole of The Tynning had become more widely used as a place to walk.
- Anecdotal evidence suggested that use of the paths had increased since the matting had been in place and there were concerns that removing the matting would mean the paths would become muddier and wider.

- That a fully costed plan for the replacement of the matting with a more durable surface should be presented and discussed at a public forum.
- That these were financially difficult times and the costs of removing the matting should be considered carefully against other items requiring funding.
- Time would be needed to raise funds for any new path and removal of the matting should wait until funds were in place.
- That the potential to use the paths as a safer way for children to access Freshford Primary School could be explored, and that the views of the School and parents should be taken into account in any decision about the future of the matting.

Councillors noted that:

- Consideration of replacing the matting with more durable and permanent paths would need to take into account Village Green legislation and the views of residents, given previous concerns about The Tying becoming 'urbanised'.
- The community and Parish Council should ensure that the matting did not become a polarising issue.

The Chair read out comments from Councillor Adler, that provided further explanation of the Parish Council's decision to remove the matting, as well as potential ways forward.

The Clerk reported that a number of residents who were unable to attend the Parish Council meeting had emailed in support of retaining the matting, and these comments would be circulated to all councillors.

174. Co-option of Councillors

A resident had expressed interest in being co-opted to the council; three councillor vacancies remained.

175. Natural Environment – Matting on The Tying

The contractor had been unable to schedule the removal of the matting on The Tying and the necessary reseeding reworks within the timescale required for reseeding to take place this Spring.

In light of comments received recently from a number of residents, the removal of the matting would be reconsidered, in consultation with the community.

176. Freshford Village Memorial Hall Car Park

Councillors considered a request for a financial contribution towards recent drainage works in the Memorial Hall car park. The Parish Council had agreed at its March meeting to pay an invoice for initial (unsuccessful) works undertaken to unblock a drain, but had not yet paid this invoice. Invoices for two further sets of works, which had led to the successful removal of a rootball blocking the drain, had now been received with a request that the total cost of all three invoices be split equally between the Memorial Hall, the Galleries and the Parish Council.

Resolved: to agree to pay a third (£420.83) of the total costs involved in unblocking the drain in the Freshford Hall car park. It was reiterated that any requests for future contributions to car park works must be brought to the Parish Council before any work was undertaken.

177. Planning Applications

24/00812/LBA & 24/00811/FUL The Corner House, The Hill, BA2 7WG: Installation of rooflight on rear elevation, refurbishment of windows and doors and internal works to include shower room at attic level.

Resolved: No comment.

24/00806/VAR Glen Cottage, Rosemary Lane, BA2 7UD: Variation of condition 3 (Plans list) of application 22/03539/FUL (Replacement single storey side extension with PV panels to the roof. First storey & side extension to the existing rear room. Internal

reconfiguration, recladding of existing dormers and replacement of existing windows with double glazed units).

Resolved: No comment.

24/01115/CLEU Peipards Farm, Warminster Road, Freshford, BA2 7UN: Construction works to form doorway constituting a material operation. (Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use).

Resolved: No comment.

178. **Tree Applications**

None.

179. **Planning**

179.1 Neighbourhood Plan Review

The Chair and Clerk had met with B&NES Planning Officers to discuss the joint Freshford and Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan (NHP), in light of Limpley Stoke Parish Council's intention to review the plan and proposal to create a separate Limpley Stoke NHP. It was reported that:

- the Freshford element of the NHP would remain in force if Limpley Stoke Parish Council decided to create a separate plan for Limpley Stoke.
- NHPs do not have to be reviewed to remain valid;
- the Parish Council was advised to wait until changes to the B&NES Local Plan were approved before undertaking any changes to the NHP, this might not be until early 2026.

179.2 Local Plan Options Consultation

The B&NES Local Plan Options consultation had been extended until 16 April 2024. Freshford was identified within the plan as a 'more sustainable village', based on its facilities and connectivity and had therefore been allocated a 5% growth target, equivalent to 15 new dwellings, over the period of the plan from 2022 to 2042. During initial discussions with Planning Officers about the Local Plan Options document, they had confirmed that where villages had been identified for growth, discussion between B&NES Officers and parish councils would be part of the formal process.

In discussion it was noted that:

- Green Belt washed over Freshford, and the village was located within the Cotswold National Landscape and these two designations would limit possible development;
- The Parish Council had been told by B&NES Planning Officers that infill housing would not count towards the identified 15 dwellings. Further explanation of this was requested, and councillors objected to new infill properties not being included in the allocation of 15 dwellings.
- The Freshford and Limpley Stoke NHP included a Housing Policy and an Affordable Housing Policy, and any development set by a Local Plan should meet the criteria set out in the NHP.
- The Freshford Mill site, which had been given planning permission some years previously, remained unfinished and completion of dwellings on this site should be considered before developing new areas.
- A meeting, as promised, between the Parish Council and B&NES Planning Officers was needed, after which the Parish Council should be able submit additional comments if needed.

Resolved: to submit comments to the Local Plan Options consultation as set out above. Comments would be circulated to the Ward Councillors and potentially revised in light of any comments from them.

180. **Annual Parish Meeting, 8 May 2024**

It was agreed that the meeting would focus on 'visions of a future Freshford'. It would involve a workshop approach, with discussion tables on particular themes. Older children would be encouraged to attend, with the meeting running from 6.30pm until 8pm to encourage this. Advertising of the event would start several weeks beforehand.

181. **Highways and Transport**

181.1 'Playing Out' event, 22 March 2024

Freshford School's 'Playing Out' event had been held and had generally gone well from the children and parents' perspective. Some residents had reported problems with collecting prescriptions. A survey had been undertaken following the event to gauge the views of the community.

School Governor Talia Kelly was thanked for her hard work in organising this event.

181.2 Other Highways updates

It was reported that:

- Spray injection patching machine work on Freshford Lane had been completed at the beginning of April, improving the road surface to some extent. Cllr Carpenter was arranging a site meeting with the Highways Inspector in May to look at other improvements that could be undertaken in Freshford.
- The road at the bottom of Staples Hill that had been damaged by flooding had been repaired and re-opened.
- There had been several attempts by B&NES to review the state of the Freshford Mill bridge but the specialist diving team were having difficulties due to the continued high river flows; they would check the situation on a weekly basis and once completed they would be in a position to determine the safety of re-opening this structure to vehicular traffic. Councillors reported that the surface of the road and railings had been repaired, giving the impression that the bridge had been fixed.
- Changes had been made to improve the WESTLink demand responsive bus service in light of feedback after its first year of operation.

182. **Street Lighting**

Enerveo had upgraded 11 street lamps to LED lights and repaired three street lights with timer faults.

Councillors recorded thanks to Richard Tibbles for his hard work on this project.

183. **Energy Project**

No update.

184. **Finance**

184.1 **Resolved:** to approve the following payments -

- £525.05 Selina Jobson for administration
- £770.00 FVMH for hall hire and donation
- £155.52 ALCA for annual subscription
- £155.00 Alan Duck for tree works in the cemetery
- £540.00 Zonkey for annual website hosting and maintenance

184.2 **Resolved:** to approve the bank reconciliation, noting the following payments and receipts –

- £203.03 SSE electricity supply (Direct Debit)
- £40.41 Water2Business rates (Direct Debit)
- £5.54 Unity Trust bank account charge
- £97.34 Interest (receipt)
- £160.00 Newsletter advertising (receipt)

184.3 **Resolved:** to add Cllr Forbes as an additional signatory to the Unity Trust bank account.

185. **External Meetings**

A second meeting of local climate and nature leads was being held on 20 June 2024, and consideration was being given to organising a river festival.

186. **Exchange of Information**

A resident had requested information about the Parish Council's actions to prevent larger vehicles driving down Dark Lane, following a recent stone wall collapse. They had also asked the Parish Council to communicate to residents that the road was closed, although councillors felt that this was now obvious, with barriers in place.

There continued to be concern about the tarpaulin that was loose on the Freshford Mill development. The administrators would be contacted about this.

Clerk

187. **Date of Next Meeting**

Annual Parish Meeting - Wednesday 8 May, 6.30pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall.

Annual Meeting of the Parish Council - Monday 13 May, 7pm, Freshford Village Memorial Hall.

Meeting ended 8.35pm.