



Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the PARISH COUNCIL FORUM** held via Zoom on Monday, 15th March, 2021 at 7.00 pm

SPEAKERS:

Mrs L Stephenson	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, Environment, Highways, Transportation & Road Safety
Mr D Wood	High Sheriff
Mr C Bacon	Clerk to Clipsham Parish Council
Mrs J Maskell	Councillor – Langham Parish Council

CLERK TO THE FORUM Ms Emma Dearsley Governance Officer

1 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL**

The Chairman welcomed Parishes to the meeting and welcomed contributions to discussions on the items on the agenda.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Tom Murie, Tixover Parish Council and Kerry Nimmons, Cottesmore Parish Council.

3 **NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Cliff Bacon proposed and Councillor Burton seconded that the notes of the last meeting that took place on 8 February 2021 be confirmed. This was unanimously agreed.

4 **ENVIRONMENT: COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK**

Councillor Stephenson gave a presentation on the Climate Change Action Group's plans to tackle the impact of climate change in Rutland and had asked Town and Parish Councils for their support with the project.

The Forum was reminded that Rutland County Council had declared a state of climate crisis, acknowledging and committing to addressing climate change at a local level. As Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, Environment, Highways, Transportation & Road Safety, Councillor Stephenson wanted to make the most of the expertise in the community by enabling and empowering every village and town to come together to create a coherent network of individual climate action groups that would work together, sharing best practice to achieve sustainable living, with net zero carbon emissions.

Councillor Stephenson advised that there would be a Climate Change Summit on 12 May 2021. This would be an opportunity to come together to launch the network of

Climate Action Groups and ensure that all worked together for the same goal of sustainable living.

A letter would be sent to all Clerks regarding the summit and asking whether they knew of anyone who wish to get involved. Cllr Stephenson asked if Clerks could email: communityclimateaction@rutland.gov.uk with relevant contact details so that she could start creating a county wide database, linking interested people together in order to create a network of groups covering the whole county.

5 INTRODUCTION TO THE HIGH SHERIFF, DAVID WOOD

Mr David Wood, who would be taking up the position of High Sheriff from April 2021, gave an overview about his role and advised the Forum that he would be focusing on poverty and loneliness as, due to the COVID pandemic, this had become even more of an issue in the community.

In addition Mr Wood, in his role as High Sherriff, would be endorsing environmental work and was looking to visit every village in Rutland to discuss biodiversity and climate change. There were many good environmental initiatives already in existence which he wanted to learn from and share with other communities. At the end of the year he wanted to choose and highlight three of the best initiatives and make a reward. A further priority was agriculture and looking into sharing best practice from around the community of the best ways of farming, looking specifically at reducing carbon foot print.

Mr Wood advised that he wished to visit Parishes (and towns) to further discuss issues, particularly around biodiversity as well as poverty and loneliness. He would also be approaching the agricultural society to discuss good practice.

It was agreed that biodiversity be added to the forward plan priorities.

6 B-LINES LAUNCH EVENT

Cliff Bacon, Clerk to Clipsham Parish Council, highlighted an open invitation to attend the Buglife's free B-Lines launch event taking place on 23rd March, 10am-12noon. This was a nature network to discuss wildlife and solutions to the decline of pollinators. The event aimed to highlight the plans to restore wildflower habitats across the UK which was an important issue in replacing biodiversity lost through development. The invite and details for attending were attached to the agenda papers.

7 UPDATE ON THREE PROJECTS THAT LANGHAM PARISH COUNCIL ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON

Councillor Jennifer Maskell from Langham Parish Council provided the Forum with an update on three projects the Parish was currently working on. These were as follows:

- These were a biodiversity project of rewilding some of the verges
- Their community park refurbishment; and
- The updating of the Langham Neighbourhood Plan.

A detailed update on these was provided and these are attached as an appendix to these minutes to refer to.

The Forum thanked Councillor Maskell for her updates which were very informative and shared good practice. A question was raised regarding how verges were chosen as in some areas these were very narrow with a degree of traffic that meant wild flowering would be difficult. In response, it was advised that they had purposely chosen verges that were wide in order in order to encourage and support growth.

The Forum asked for more information regarding the funding for the Community Park. Members were interested to hear that Langham had achieved funding through a company called '4grants' to write the applications for it. The agreement was based on a "no win no fee" basis with 10% commission only payable on success and payable at the point when the grant money arrived in its bank account.

The Forum thanked Councillor Maskell for sharing the update and Councillor Stephenson would take away the good practice, particularly about the biodiversity project and how this could be further explored in Rutland.

8 PARISH FORUM FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Forward Programme was discussed as noted below and the Forum was asked for any further items to be considered at future meetings. Updates are included below. Parishes were encouraged to contact Governance if there were items or updates they would like to receive or give at the next meeting.

Date of Meeting	Potential Items
19 April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • External Funding – How RCC and Parish and Town Councils can access external funding and the process for applications.

Suggested items with no specific date:

- Leisure (verbal)
- Highways and Transport Working Group process – Speeding
- Updates from previous items as appropriate
- Scrutiny – How the Parish Forum could contribute to this work.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Rutland Conservation

Councillor Helmsley advised that the Rutland Conservation leaflet was shortly going to be sent out and that the Council would like Parishes to support this as ambassadors, as well as contributing to the work.

The Future Rutland Conservation Project aimed to involve local people in a process that would develop a new vision and outline the aspirations for the county – one that would help Rutland County Council to co-create new strategies and policies to achieve these goals.

A Stakeholder Group was being established and details would be circulated and members were encouraged to nominate people to be part of this. Further details would be sent out towards the end of the month.

Further details could be found on the website [here](#).

COVID in the County

Mark Andrews, Interim Chief Executive, advised that the number of COVID cases in the County had fallen below the national average. On 23rd March 2021 there would be a minutes silence to commemorate those both in the community and nationally that had died or suffered during the pandemic. An e-book was being established to write notes and a plaque would be placed on the library.

It was noted that the first COVID case in the area was recorded on 27th March 2020. Nearly a year on from this date, Mr Andrews reported much more positive news with the number of cases falling and the vaccination programme going well. Thanks was given to all involved with this.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was 19th April 2021 and it was hoped that representatives could attend.

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The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.13 pm.

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Langham verges, biodiversity project

Langham Parish Council were approached by a member of the community in 2020 about a biodiversity project to manage some of the verges in the village. The Langham Neighbourhood Plan (LNP) encourages the protection and enhancement of wildlife havens and green infrastructure in order to support and sustain protected species and to encourage biodiversity. RCC is also committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity across Rutland.

The verges biodiversity project has the aim of increasing both plant and animal diversity and encouraging “corridors” for fauna to thrive and move about. Planting of “wild areas” within the existing verges is a tried and tested method of improving biodiversity. The selection of a suitable verge needs to consider road safety first, so cannot be on bends in roads and junctions where taller vegetation would reduce visibility ahead for drivers. We want to make this development sympathetic to the village by including regionally appropriate planting of flowers which are low height and self-sustaining. Initially 5 areas have been chosen on significant verges around the village where we can work out the best way to sow the seeds and assess the results over the next 12-18 months. We have consulted immediate neighbours of these areas to ensure they understand what we are doing and are happy with it. Generally the project has been well received by the community. A small sum of money has been set aside by the Parish Council to cover such things as seed costs.

The species of plant that we have chosen are Yellow Rattle, Cowslips and Birdsfoot Trefoil. They are self-sustaining, easy to plant and offer a variety of colour, height and interest. They will be planted as 1m to 1.5m strips along the existing verges and with deeper areas where possible.

Some members of the community have joined two Parish Councillors to work on this project. The project was started in September 2020 with an initial close cut of one verge, scarifying the ground to create areas where the seeds can establish themselves followed by surface scattering of a mixed seed. The areas will be marked with blue hearts, the symbol of wildflower verges, to show the extent of the sowing and hopefully within 12 months we will see the start of a new and attractive verge.

To help the wildflowers to grow we have reduced the mowing of the areas and collecting the grass clippings as uncollected clippings increase weed growth and “suffocate” the wildflowers.

One issue we had not planned for is the possible need for a cultivation licence from RCC. We are still waiting for the licence but hopefully if we receive it shortly we will have time to complete the 2021 planting with results in summer 2021, or more likely spring 2022.

If the trial is successful we will expand the planting across the village over the next 3 years.

JM – 12.03.21

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Langham Community Park update

Introduction

Langham Community Park last received funding in approximately 2001 and since this time it has been maintained by Langham Parish Council (LPC) with very little further investment other than routine maintenance. Until recently the equipment has been fit for purpose. However, in the second half of 2019 we realised that some of the equipment was getting tired, and one item was becoming unsafe. We decided to remove this equipment and investigate the possibility of getting some grant funding to help with the refurbishment. After applying for a grant ourselves, a “pocket parks grant”, but being unsuccessful, we decided to enlist the help of a company called 4grants to write the applications for us. The agreement was based on a “no win no fee” basis with 10% commission only payable on success and payable at the point when the grant money arrived in our bank account. This opportunity was then approved by LPC.

The project was identified through the Neighbourhood plan, and we then held a village consultation event at the Village Hall. We worked with members of the community, community groups and organisations. We held discussions with existing groups and looked at potential new groups to understand their needs and aspirations.

The Funding

4 Grants made a total of 3 applications on our behalf.

The National Lottery Community Fund gives grants to organisations in the UK to help improve their communities. We were unsuccessful with this application due to timing, and plan to re-apply for our phase 2 park development plan. We believe that this is a relatively easy fund to apply for and receive a grant.

The Mick George Community Fund provides grants between £10,000 and £50,000 to community projects from Landfill Communities fund. Our application for this grant was declined.

FCC Communities Foundation awards grants to community projects from funds donated by FCC Environment through the Landfill Communities Fund and Scottish Landfill Communities Fund. We were successful in obtaining this grant on 4 December 2020 and secured a total grant of £53,450.00 towards the eligible costs of the project subject to payments by LPC of £5,745.88 third party funding (required as part of the grant to release the funding) and a further contribution of £10,000 made towards the project.

This grant was open for a period of 6 months from 13 December 2020. Total contribution from LPC as follows:

Third party funding £5745.88

Contribution towards the project £10,000

Commission to 4Grants £5454.00

Total outlay for LPC £21199.88

Next steps

To ensure we obtained best value for money and to maximise the equipment we could purchase given the value of the grant, we decided to go out and request up to six tenders from external suppliers, to ensure we receive a minimum of 3 which was stipulated as part of the grant process. These tender documents were sent out on 15 January 2021 with a closing date of end of February. We are in the process of making the final selection this month and will then award the contract immediately. Hopefully it is planned to start work in May with a completion date at the end of June.

The equipment selection

During the pandemic we used the Parish Council website to get opinions and ideas from the community about the refurbishment and what equipment would be welcomed. We are trying to offer equipment suitable for a range of age groups which includes young children, teenagers and exercise equipment suitable for all ages as well as the less able. We are also planning an area where dogs can be secured safely so that families can enjoy the Community Park. As a result we came up with a list of key equipment:

- Zip Wire
- Toddlers play area with suitable equipment for this age group. Suitably fenced and safe from the ball game area and including safe rubber surface
- MUGA (multi use games area for teenagers including basketball and goal post
- Spinner for teenagers to use as a meeting place
- Adult cardio area with a range of exercise equipment aimed at the older generation
- Climbing tower c/w slide walkways etc
- Parent friendly swings to allow better utilization for parent and toddlers
- Suitable seating

The final selection is still underway.

JM - 12.03.21

Langham Neighbourhood Plan

Langham Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' in 2017, and in 2018 we were awarded the Leicestershire & Rutland Rural Community Council's Community Engagement Award for the plan. It is due to be reviewed and updated this year. In view of the emerging RCC Local Plan, and also the draft RCC and South Kesteven Design Guidelines, as well as the Government White Paper on Planning, at the end of last year as a Parish Council we decided to assemble a Steering Group to lead this process. The Steering Group consists of Parish Councillors and some members of the community, all of whom were involved in the original preparation of the LNP. Our plan needs to align with the documents I have mentioned, and the needs of the community may also have changed over the 4 years since the plan was published, so we need to ensure it is still relevant to the community it seeks to protect.

We have already met several times, by Zoom because of current restrictions, and have also put up posters in the village as well as information on the Parish Council website to keep the community both informed and engaged with our plans. We have taken advice from Roger Ranson at RCC with regard to the parameters of timing for this work, and understand Cllr Gordon Brown may also be able to give us some guidance going forward. We have received a grant from Locality of approximately £2,350 to cover our expenses in undertaking the review.

The Steering Group does not anticipate radical change to the Policies set out in the current plan but:

The wording of some Policies will benefit from improvement so that they cannot be misinterpreted.

Some new policies – around biodiversity and energy renewal - might be more relevant today than they were in 2017.

And there is an opportunity to streamline the document now that we have the experience of producing the first version and the benefit of hindsight.

Whilst the Steering Group will drive the project and do much of the work, it is essential that any changes that the Steering Group suggests are supported by the community. We therefore plan, as they come available, to put proposed changes to Policies on the website for the community to give their views on any changes. The final version of all Policies will then reflect the views of the majority who respond.

We also plan to try and involve members of the community in sharing some of the workload, for example, by proof reading, putting up posters, delivering flyers and so on. In addition we have asked those who have neighbours who do not use the internet to keep them informed of our progress as much as they can, and also will put regular updates in the bi-monthly Langham News.

As one of the earlier Neighbourhood Plans in Rutland to be made, we also feel it is useful to look at some of the more recent ones to help us decide on any changes that may be appropriate.

JM – 12.03.21

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