

THRIPLow PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held via Zoom Monday 1st March 2021 at 7.30 pm

Present: Mark Brogan (Chairman), David Easthope, Jane Gough, Terry Smith, Kit Jackson, David Schneider, Carly Richman, Charlotte Kirby, Luigi Murton
County Cllr. Peter McDonald (arrived late from another meeting)
District Cllr. Richard Williams
Minute taker Pat Easthope
Members of the public also in attendance:-
Pippa Kendall, Angharad Harris, Ryan Hetherington, Rowan Pashley, Emma Vipers Mainey, Paul Mainey, Simon Hutchins, Nicola Delderfield, Aaron Randall

Action

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Sue Meehan (parish clerk)

2. **Ringstone Public Open Space & Parking problems**

Cllr Brogan welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that the meeting would be divided into 3 sections. Firstly Parish Councillors would give some background information to the meeting, saying what had been done and what is currently understood. The council meeting would then be closed in order to allow members of the public to speak, following which the council meeting would be resumed in order that councillors could determine the next moves.

Cllr Brogan explained that parish councillors had discussed the parking problems in Ringstone and on the P.O.S. many times since 2019. Matters had come to a head again recently following a lot of bad weather and vehicles driving across, and parking on, the grass had badly damaged the surface. It had originally been hoped that S. 106 funds could be used to form a proper parking area, however recent advice from the District Council is that S. 106 funds cannot be used for this purpose and the funding would have to come from parish council funds. They also advised that a planning approval for a change of use of part of the public open space to car parking would be needed.

District Cllr Williams reported that he has also spoken to the planners about a possible change of use and they were not overly enthusiastic, however if it was decided to make a planning application the process should be started as soon as possible.

Cllr Smith said that contractors can't cut the grass when cars are parked on it. Quotes recently received for an area of hardstanding 38m x 3.5m were:-

Cobb & Sons £5,611 + VAT (gravel)

Hillplant £7,480 + VAT (gravel)

£14818 + VAT (pavers)

C Watson £15,000 + VAT (pavers) He would not quote for gravel and also suggested that if bollards were used then concrete would be better than wood.

Cllr Richman had obtained a quote for commercial grade plastic matting with a life span of 24 years. The complete job, including bollards, would cost £24,000.

Cllr Schneider had obtained a price of some £2,300 for 35/36 wooden bollards to prevent any parking on the grass.

Cllr Kirby suggested that tree trunks could be used rather than bollards.

It was suggested that if gravel were used it would not only spread onto the road but would also spread onto the grass which would cause problems for the grass cutters. Cllr Easthope said that where gravel is used for private drives the Highways department ask for a hard surface band between the gravel and the road to eliminate the problem of gravel spreading onto the road. He also pointed out that the land is designated public open space and is for everyone to use and is not solely for the benefit of the residents of Ringstone.

Cllrs Kirby and Richman mentioned that all around the Ringstone road a different coloured brick paver has been used to distinguish that part of the road available for parking from the main carriageway. This would allow parallel parking beside the P O S but the problem was that vehicles were parking partly on the P.O.S. which has damaged the grass. There were an average of 10 vehicles currently using the space but it was thought that 15 might be accommodated although it was pointed out that space must be left for the grass cutters to access the green. They understood that there were some specific visitor parking spaces and felt that all residents should be made more aware of visitor parking. Cllr Richman has a map of the development and will see what this indicates.

CR

Disabled parking was mentioned and Cllr Easthope thought that if parking were provided on the POS there would probably be a requirement for 2 disabled spaces.

Other points raised were:-

If only a few residents benefited from a new parking area how would the remaining residents feel?

Families may start with one or two cars but as the children grow and get their own cars the parking problems get worse, however, the number of cars a family has cannot be controlled.

Parking cannot be policed and would rely on peoples' good nature.

If a parking area were formed on part of the Ringstone POS then other areas of Heathfield where there are similar parking problems may expect the same treatment.

Caravan parking – It is understood that when Ringstone was built regulations stated that no caravan parking was allowed but this expired after 10 years and there is no method of enforcement.

Nobody has asked for extra parking, the only complaints have been about the damage to the POS ground.

White lines marking out parking spaces might help. Cllr Williams said that dotted lines to indicate parking spaces outside the Whittlesford shop have definitely improved the parking problems there.

Cllr Gough said that all Ringstone residents should be consulted and that the consultation document should also indicate where the parking areas are. She also said that there could be an insurance problem for the parish council if a vehicle was involved in an accident on the P O S.

At 8.30pm the chairman closed the meeting to allow members of the public to speak. The points raised were:-

AR did not understand why the parish council are planning to spend money to enable people to park when every property has its own parking spaces.

SH said that when moving into Ringstone in 2019 he parked on the green because everyone else did. He has now moved his vehicle. Visitor parking areas are not clear. Outsiders park on the green on air show days.

RH suggested heavy duty matting would cost less than £2000 and should last 20 years. He will forward the details to the parish council. Cllr Richman said that this sounded like the matting she had found but that it couldn't be laid straight onto the ground and excavation would be needed which would raise the cost.

PM said that everywhere in Ringstone is public parking – it is natural for people to want to park outside their own homes but some of the visitor parking is actually in front of peoples' houses.

Cllr Kirby said that people have chosen to convert car ports, etc. into living space, which is their choice, but then they park on the road.

In answer to the question "Why have 'Residents parking only' notices appeared in Hurdles Way?, it was explained that this is not a parish council matter, that these notices have been put up by residents and that they are not enforceable.

AH said that Google maps are not always up to date and councillors should be wary of relying on them.

It was also mentioned that the road is narrow and if a child ran out from between parked cars when another car was passing there is nowhere for the moving car to go to avoid a collision.

There being no further comments from members of the public the chairman thanked the participants and the parish council meeting was resumed at 8.50pm.

County Cllr McDonald said that the covenants on the Ringstone properties should be checked. He also suggested asking a highways expert to visit the site and give an opinion and Cllr Kirby confirmed that these had expired and were no longer enforceable.

Cllr Brogan said there were two options (a) Bollards to stop all parking on the grass and (b) parking.

After discussion the following was agreed:-

Cllr McDonald will try to arrange for someone from Highways to visit site as soon as possible and give their views.

PMcD

All information should be put together (Highway officers' opinion, map showing parking areas, options, financial implications, insurance implications, etc.) Cllr Gough will draft an initial message for a consultation with residents and circulate it to all councillors for comments/approval. Assuming that providing a parking area on the POS is a possibility the message must include the fact that the parking option will be subject to planning approval.

JG/all

Consultation with all Ringstone residents giving them all the known facts will follow when all of the information is available.

In the meantime there should be no parking on the grassed area of the POS in order to allow the damaged ground to recover. No Parking notices will be displayed on the POS which will also have reference to the problem regarding insurance.

Cllr Schneider suggested that it would be helpful to know how many cars are parking in Ringstone before the next PC meeting. Cllr Richman offered to check this.

CR

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.25pm.

Post Meeting Note: Below is an extract from an email received from James Toombs (County Highways officer) on 3.3.2021

'I have spoken to someone from development management regarding this and the area around the edge should not be used for parking due to the road widths. As such we cannot delineate this as parking for residents with white lining.'

Signed
Chairman

Date.....