

COLD ASTON PARISH COUNCIL

APPROVED minutes OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON **Wednesday 14th April 2021** Via zoom, Starting at 6.45pm. zoom link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87808099880?pwd=b1FvbTNlMmQxOVVlaHJFSWZQKzI3QT09>

Public Participation -15 minutes at discretion of chair of meeting-

Thanks were given to the Parish Council for organising the big litter pick.

Correspondence from member of the public was read out.

The Council also recorded its appreciation and thanks to previous members of the Council

1. Apologies and Attendance were recorded
Parish Councillors Paula Marchant, Yvonne Nicholas and Greg Pearce. County Councillor P Hodgkinson and 6 members of the public
No Apologies received
District Councillor Richard Keeling had been invited
2. Declaration of Interests for any interests on matters of the agenda were invited - none
3. Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2021
4. Verbal Report from County Councillor Hodgkinson including COVID updates, including extension of testing capacity – see NHS website.
Reporting of pot holes via REPORT IT portal.
Speed checks on Whiteshoots Hill will be carried out.
Broadband users in Whiteshoots hill area were asked to contact Fastershire via website to register interest in slow broadband.
5. Report from District Councillor not available
6. Payments for approved as attached
7. Financial reports as attached approved
Cash book
Budget against actual
8. Highway and PROW matters discussed
Drainage outside Grove Farmhouse and Sycamore House has been reported to Highways.
9. PROW definitive map and the significance of 2026 correspondence – as distributed via email- clerk to put on the website for members of the public to access
10. Update from residents working party regarding Village map /information pack -ongoing
11. Update from residents working party regarding Chapel Lane sign-County Councillor Hodgkinson has advised the residents to contact Highways who then advised residents to contact planning dept and were then advised they needed to contact District Council and the proposed sign has now been approved. A sign will be purchased and it was agreed that the Parish Council will contribute £50
12. Council considered planning applications received and distributed via email
Where Councillors have declared an interest, they are not allowed to take part in the decision making process and in this case the Council will be non-quorate for these items and will not be allowed to make a decision. Parishioners are advised to make representations to the District Council via the planning portal, should they wish to comment on these applications.
Applications have also been distributed to data base
Erection of single storey rear extension at Folly Farm Cottage Notgrove Road Cold Aston 21/01113/FUL – **no comment**
Installation of new roofs and fenestration alterations to facilitate conversion of attached agricultural building to form gym and home office at Longbrook Barn Farm 20/03560/FUL - **no comment**

13. Ecology report discussed –b fwd from previous meeting- Council noted that it was on the website -
cfwd to next meeting
14. Allotments matters discussed and general repairs and maintenance costs to be approved
Access to specific plots will be discussed by Councillor Nicholas
Registering of the allotment land has been followed up by Councillor Nicholas
15. Council noted letter has been sent relating to village verges following on from the actions agreed
at the previous meeting- It was noted that the Village pays for the upkeep of the verges and
areas are being damaged by vehicles. Going forward Clerk will send letters to relevant properties
when identified by Councillors.
Council also considered village kerbsides, clearance of leaves and debris- matters to be reported
via the REPORT IT website and via Highways Manager.
16. Council noted update on bio-diversity project not yet available/on website
17. Council discussed items relating to trees in the Village
including update relating to Ash Trees project –from the Nurture Nature group- it was noted that
unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful this year:
The Ash Tree on Bang up Lane discussed- some markings on trees but no feedback from Glos
Highways. Councillor Pearce will follow up
18. Bramble in the holly bush in Chapel Lane –brought forward – Councillor Nicholas reported that a
resident has offered to facilitate the removal of the bramble at the appropriate time of the year.
19. Council noted update on election of 2 parish councillors as distributed via email- elected without
poll Mark Ziles and Amanda Kimpton
20. Council agreed date of next meeting **agreed Wednesday 5th May at 6.45pm via zoom – AGM and
Parish Assembly 7.45pm**
21. Any other business for information purposes – no decisions can be made at this point
Clerk to set up gmail email account.
Meeting closed 19.28pm

Financial reports

Payments approved

Monthly standing order for salary

Expenses for clerk £72.39 (working from home March and April x£26 , printing £2.70 and postage 5 x 46p) Mileage £15.39 (cheque signing to take place after this meeting)

Grass Cutting CSG £66.00 invoice 31/3/21

National Allotment Society annual membership £66.00

GAPTC annual membership £68.42

PATA payroll £69.75

I Thompson £157.80- allotment gate repair (paid via Cllr Nicholas)

HMRC year end balance

BANK RECONCILIATION					
01/04/2020	OPENING BANK BALANCE		24183.07		
	EXPENDITURE FOR PERIOD	6004.78			
	INCOME FOR PERIOD	12919.10			
	NET INCOME		6914.32		
31/03/2021	BANK BALANCE		31097.39		
31/03/2021	BAL PER S/M			31097.39	
	u/presented	cheques			
				0.00	
	Reconciled balance			31097.39	0.00
unreconcilled bank balance a/c 22516168	community fund			closed	31097.39
last statement 13 dated 1/1/15					

Cash book to 31/3/21

01/04/2019	O/BALANCE			24183.07	
17/04/2020	precept	3188.00	3188.00	27371.07	
27/04/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	27215.49	
26/05/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	27059.91	
25/06/2020	expenses	42.50	-42.50	27017.41	222
26/06/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	26861.83	
07/06/2020	cgs	132.00	-132.00	26729.83	223
07/06/2020	boyle & grimes	619.20	-619.20	26110.63	224
30/05/2020	BHIB	353.51	-353.51	25757.12	225
27/07/2020	PATA	23.25	-23.25	25733.87	229
27/07/2020	HMRC	116.60	-116.60	25617.27	228
27/07/2020	CGS	330.00	-330.00	25287.27	230
27/07/2020	GAPTC	65.79	-65.79	25221.48	231
27/07/2020	expenses	59.55	-59.55	25161.93	232
31/08/2020	HMRC	3.47	-3.47	25158.46	233
28/07/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	25002.88	SO
28/08/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	24847.30	SO
28/09/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	24691.72	so
28/09/2020	allotment	-34.00	34.00	24725.72	
11/09/2020	allotment	-139.00	139.00	24864.72	
24/09/2020	precept	-1062.00	1062.00	25926.72	
30/09/2020	hmrc	117.00	-117.00	25809.72	234
30/09/2020	expenses	73.94	-73.94	25735.78	235
30/09/2020	pata	23.25	-23.25	25712.53	236
28/10/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	25556.95	so
28/11/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	25401.37	so
28/12/2020	salary	155.58	-155.58	25245.79	so
28/01/2021	salary	155.58	-155.58	25090.21	so
24/11/2020	expenses	53.20	-53.20	25037.01	237
25/11/2020	hmrc	74.33	-74.33	24962.68	238
24/01/2021	expenses*	78.92	-78.92	24883.76	239
04/12/2020	YN dog bag	149.58	-149.58	24734.18	240
04/12/2020	sj website	26.20	-26.20	24707.98	241
04/12/2020	pata payroll	23.25	-23.25	24684.73	242
04/12/2020	HMRC	117.00	-117.00	24567.73	243
04/12/2020	ab agriculture	681.84	-681.84	23885.89	244
04/12/2020	cgs	132.00	-132.00	23753.89	245
18/11/2020	from deposit	-8445.10	8445.10	32198.99	income
18/11/2020	allotment inc	-34.00	34.00	32232.99	income
24/01/2021	allotment inc	-17.00	17.00	32249.99	income
28/02/2021	salary	155.58	-155.58	32094.41	so
31/03/2021	salary	155.58	-155.58	31938.83	so
21/02/2021	LM Garden	600.00	-600.00	31338.83	246
01/03/2021	I Thompson	157.80	-157.80	31181.03	247
28/02/2021	Marsh commercial	83.64	-83.64	31097.39	248

Budget against actual

BUDGET/ACTUAL ANALYSIS 31/03/21	BUDGET	Y TO DATE	BALANCE AVAILABLE TO SPEND	NOTES
PRECEPT	4250	-4250	0	
inter acc transfer (reserves)	0	-8445	-8445	reserves
allotment income	190	-224	-34	
		-		
INCOME	4440	12919	8479	
EMPLOYMENT COSTS	2350	2295	55	
HIRE OF VENUE	25	0	25	
SUBSCRIPTIONS	175	66	109	
AUDIT	250	0	250	
INSURANCE	380	354	26	
USE OF HOME / mileage/ stationery etc	440	308	132	
WEBSITE /PAYROLL COSTS	100	96	4	
GRASS MOWING	1300	594	706	
VERGE MOWING	195	682	-487	waiting income
ALLOTMENTS expenditure	350	241	143	inc excess income
TRAINING	0	0	0	
MAINTENANCE OF ASSETS	250	769	-519	pump
TREES	850	600	250	
deficit EXPECTED	-2225	-1528	-697	underspend
reserves		8445		
EXPENDITURE YEAR TO DATE TOTALS	4440	12922	-3	
NET BALANCES		3		

Wildlife and the allotments

1. Introduction
2. Shared areas and paths
3. Nesting sites for birds
4. Trees
5. The common lizard colony
6. The ivy question
7. Finally

1.Introduction

Questions concerning the future direction of the allotments continue to exercise the parish council and allotmenters. A wide range of views have been expressed, from those who would prefer by far the allotment patch to be neater and tidier than it is now, to those who see the area primarily as a wildlife haven. Opinion has polarised around these positions but it is my aim here to show that there is a middle path.

The primary purpose of an allotment is to grow food. On a well-run allotment, yields can be achieved of about a pound weight per square foot of ground cultivated, placing allotments among the most productive land in the parish. (This value is equivalent to very slightly under 20 tons per acre, far above agricultural yields which are about 4 tons per acre in the parish). Locally-grown food has well-known benefits in terms of carbon footprint, food miles, freshness and nutrient content.

There are as many styles of horticulture practised on the allotments as there are allotment holders. At the extremes, some practise conventional horticulture using pesticides and synthetic fertilisers whereas others use organic methods which employ natural controls and composts. At first sight these two approaches have little in common; this is not true.

Even the most conventional horticultural system relies on wildlife to some extent, and particularly upon pollinators. All soft fruit (raspberries, blackcurrants, strawberries, etc) and all top fruit (apples, pears, plums, etc) are insect-pollinated - particularly by bees. Many crops flower too early to be pollinated by honeybees and so we must rely on wild bees to pollinate them. Also, fruit-set on later-flowering crops is usually superior if wild bees rather than honey bees do the pollinating. As for vegetables, legumes (all beans but not peas, they are self-pollinated), cucurbits (squashes, courgettes etc) and solanaceous (peppers, tomatoes etc) crops among others are bee-pollinated. In every case we must `borrow` wild bees from nearby habitats because they do not live on the allotment plots themselves.

But, we cannot merely supply some pollen and nectar in spring and early summer and expect the bees to hang around. If their needs are not supplied they will – if they can - go elsewhere at the very least or may even be driven to local extinction. They need to collect pollen and nectar when our crops no longer provide any and also need places to nest and to hibernate too. Every useful bee has slightly different requirements; some collect pollen from a very few kinds of flower, some nest in bare soil, some in short turf and others nest in timber and in old, dead stems. There are over 250 species of wild bee in Britain, all with different requirements.

Very similar arguments apply to predatory insects (ladybirds – 43 species; hoverflies – 286 species; solitary wasps – over 7,000 species, and yes, that last figure is correct) that help to control pests (aphids, thrips, mites etc) even in conventional systems.

Wildlife is thus an integral part of small-scale horticulture. The allotmenters all need beneficial insects - it is just that the organic growers need them more because they do not use chemical props - and we need to provide diverse habitats in which all our insect friends thrive. Ecologists have found repeatedly that the imposition of anthropocentric values such as neatness and tidiness only serve to reduce diversity and thus the number of beneficial insects available to us. A certain amount of wildlife-friendliness is essential to the well-being of the allotments.

The allotments generally made a giant leap towards environmental friendliness with the installation of the rainwater harvesting system. It works, despite teething problems, and improvements are under consideration. I suggest that the following simple steps can also be taken easily to further improve the environmental credentials of the site generally.

2. Shared areas and paths.

Paths are of course the responsibility of the allotment holders, but shared areas which are not often or never used for foot traffic can be used to encourage wildflowers, further encouraging beneficial insects. A few years ago, rather uncommon plants such as hound's tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) could be found on the allotments; it is a wonderful plant for bees, but has not been seen for some years.

3. Nesting sites for birds.

Birds too are useful predators of pests but there are few suitable nest sites on the allotments. Nest boxes could be erected but the long-term aim should be to encourage plants in which birds will nest naturally. A productive blackberry bush on one of the allotments is home every year to blackbirds and occasionally dunnocks.

4. Trees.

NB. THE PARISH COUNCIL'S TREE REPORT IS NOT ACCESSIBLE. THE LINK DOES NOT WORK.

Trees generally are excellent for wildlife but are not necessarily altogether desirable on an allotment site because they compete with crop plants for light, water and nutrients. However, some of our native species - and apple trees - support hundreds of invertebrate species many of which play a role in pest control.

Unused areas could also be planted with fruit trees further enhancing productivity. The idea, suggested at the on-site meeting, of planting hazel (which is not a tree, it is a shrub) would in just a few years generate a supply of bean poles, pea sticks and plant supports for allotmenters and would reduce the use of high-footprint bamboo. Also, the simple fact that hazel is harvested on a five- or six-year rotation would serve to eliminate light obstruction of nearby dwellings. The conifers in the corner take a great deal of light from the nearby allotments and houses; the removal and replacement of these non-natives would help all round. At the moment, from the allotments' point of view all they do is provide some physical shelter for wildlife. If an evergreen replacement were desired one could do far worse than yew, which has a great advantage - among conifers - in that it

regenerates from mature wood and can thus easily withstand major pruning, as well as having native status and providing both food and shelter for birds.

5.The common lizard colony.

The common lizard is a protected but declining native species. Advice should be sought from specialists such as the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust on helping the colony to thrive. At the moment vegetation is encroaching on the site of the colony.

6.The ivy question.

Ivy generates heated debate. On one side, ivy is considered to be pernicious and therefore best removed; on the other, ivy is seen as harmless and a great boon to wildlife for its late flowers, winter berries and all-year provision of shelter. This controversy about ivy has rumbled on in Britain for decades. Received opinion today is that ivy only takes hold in trees that are stressed in some way or have open canopies allowing light to percolate down, such as ash. In this view the growth of ivy is more a consequence of poor tree health, rather than the ivy growing and causing poor tree health, in other words a reversal of the view so commonly held. One only has to look at trees in the parish to see that most ivy in trees occurs in either ash with its naturally open canopy or other trees in which the canopy is open or rather small for some reason, such as poor pruning or very packed plantings. Almost any arboricultural website will explain the issue more fully. The Arboricultural Association – the official trade body – has a good site.

7.Finally

The overall aim for the allotments should therefore be one of productivity with enhanced wildlife diversity. With their productivity, the rainwater harvesting system, some existing highly diverse areas and the lizard colony the allotments are already more than halfway to achieving excellent environmental credentials.

It is not unusual for successful community projects to receive recognition officially. There is even a series of awards run by the CPRE for small environmentally-friendly schemes (partially replacing the Bledisloe cup).

Jo Kirby

14 January 2021