

Annual Village Meeting

Wednesday 8th May 2024, Rowde Primary School

Minutes

1. Review of the minutes of the last Annual Village Meeting, held on Wednesday 10th May 2023.

No comments were made.

2. Community reports

- Alice Simpson – Headteacher of Rowde Primary School

Ms Simpson updated the meeting on the results of the long-awaited Ofsted report. The inspectors returned to the school in February 2024, having last visited in March 2019. The school was rated as having a strong 'good' outcome. Inspectors recognised the changes that the school had been through. The Inspectors commented that they had never seen such a positive parent view before.

Ms Simpson noted that there is now stability in the teaching staff with a permanent Headteacher. It has been really hard work to get back to this level of rating.

The school currently has 100 children on roll. There will be 20 children joining Reception in September 2024. There is capacity for the school to grow. The more children that attend the school, the more resources will be made available to the school.

Swimming pool: the school has received planning permission to fill in the swimming pool and install EV charging points. Work will be carried out on the drainage in the school. The first step is to fill in the pool. The second step is to landscape the area. This is being looked at by architects. There will be space for the bus to turn around safely.

- Anthony Dixon – Project Manager for construction at Silverwood School (WC).

The new classroom block will be open in the Autumn 2024. The construction work should be completely finished by 2025. There are currently 459 pupils across different campus sites (Larkrise, St Nicholas, and Silverwood). This number will increase to 490 in September 2024; 233 pupils will be at Silverwood. This amounts to a 90 pupil increase when the new academic year starts. There will be provision at Silverwood for children from early years to above 16.

The schools at Trowbridge and Chippenham will be more primary based: key stage 1 and 2, although this is not fixed.

The children will be transported to Silverwood School in 42 minibuses, supplemented by taxis. There is capacity to take more children on the minibuses if needed. There will be 209 car parking spaces from September 2024. There is holding space for 80 minibuses and capacity for 90 within the current car park road. In September, there should not be the same problems with traffic backing onto the main road.

There will be some localised work on the A342 in the summer holidays. Work that is still to be completed:

1. Updated travel plan – submitted and approved.
2. Try to encourage staff and visitors to use the bus more by installing two bus shelters.
3. Localised improvements to clear vegetation from footpath to make it a bit wider and to improve sightlines. Work is due to start this summer.
4. Work to the main house – will go out to tender. There will be a new science classroom, personal care space. There will be better access to the main house for children with mobility issues.
5. Improvement works to the Trowbridge and Chippenham school. Both sites have about 100 pupils; their capacity is around 75. Silverwood will become all through care.

Question: are there plans to prevent gulls nesting on the new flat roofs?

A: most of the roof space will be covered by pv solar panels. There are no plans specifically to deal with nesting gulls.

Q: Speed limit outside of the school which is currently 50 mph. L Wills noted that when the planning application to build at the school was made, the Parish Council understood that the speed limit would be lowered, from a 50mph a 30mph. There is a serious safety aspect about the speed of traffic outside of the school.

Cllr Laura Mayes have been working hard on this, over the past 6 – 9 months consulting with the Police. It is proposed that the speed limit will be reduced from 50mph to 40mph. It isn't appropriate to reduce to 30mph. It is to do with house frontages; the school is set back; neither pupils nor staff walk to school. There are no other frontages. It has been a battle. It is hoped that with a reduced speed limit of 40 mph and the improved works within the campus, that that will be sufficient to keep everyone safe. It needs time to allow it to settle in and see what happens.

L Wills noted that there is at least one Plus Student who would walk from the village.

It was noted that the Parish Council still maintains that the speed limit should be reduced to 30mph outside of the school.

- Lisa Gurr – Director for The Mind Tree Cafe

Ms Gurr updated the meeting that Phase 1 is nearly completed. Low-cost counselling will be available in therapy rooms. An Oxford based company worked on the project to make the buildings habitable again. All of the burst pipes have been repaired and there are flushing toilets and running water. The two boilers still need to be repaired so that there will be heating in the winter.

There have been donations of carpets from local businesses. Carpet fitters are doing it at low cost for the organisation. A carpenter will re-hang the doors.

The whole building will then be completely finished.

On 3rd June – Counselling rooms open.

There will be a soft opening on 8th June – between 10 – 12pm for people to look around.

Things are looking really exciting.

The leadership team have interviewed qualified counsellors, and also have a team of student counsellors who need to complete 100 hours of counselling before they are fully qualified.

A previous employee of HfT, has returned to help with the orchards and he is bringing in a couple of groups to help out. There will be some chickens (no roosters).

When phase two is up and running, there will be a café and shop.

HELP NEEDED: with applying for national grid funding. How is the project to put pylons underground affecting the residents of Rowde?

A: Traffic on Conscience Lane.

There are plans for a scrap material day, with tonnes of donated scrap material.

Ms Gurr asked B Zaccarelli how The Mind Tree café can be involved with the Rowde Festival. B Zaccarelli will make contact with L Gurr about this.

- Tim Buxton: The owner of the Cross Keys pub and adjacent car park

A planning application has been submitted for two houses on the car park site of the Cross Keys pub. A number of people raised concerns, from design to conservation office, issues around visibility onto the main road; the means of getting in and out of the new build; and amenity space that comes with the new houses.

Mr Buxton met with the planning officer yesterday (7/5/24) and discussed all of these points. It is now proposed that there will be one house on that plot, with a private garden to one side and parking on site. Mr Buxton is still proposing to enlarge the site by taking

some of the existing pavement space. Concerns had been raised about that. Visibility splay from the junction at Marsh Lane onto the A342 is important. It is proposed that there will be a 2.5 metre pavement which will pull the line of the pavement right back, so there should be no problems with visibility from the Marsh Lane junction.

Q: there would be concern about planting/landscaping if the proposed build is built onto most of the existing pavement space. Mr Buxton confirmed that there will be an extra metre/metre and a half more than in the original proposal.

Q: could the fencing around the front part of the Cross Keys be removed, as that causes a visibility problem too. Mr Buxton said he would look at that.

Q: with regards to the Best Kept Village competition, it was asked if Mr Buxton could tidy the frontage of the Cross Keys pub, and also take down the 'for sale' sign on the car park side.

Q: what are the plans for the Cross Keys pub? Mr Buxton confirmed that he is looking for occupiers at the moment. He does not think it will remain as a pub, but it could be converted to office, shops, or houses.

- Cllr Laura Mayes - Wiltshire Councillor for Bromham, Rowde and Roundway.

Cllr Mayes has been busy with case work on housing, planning, benefits, roads, and floods. Other matters outstanding include the footpath up to Devizes and the roadside trench on Devizes Road.

Cllr Mayes invited Anthony Dixon to attend this meeting. It was important to get the village's support for the expansion at Silverwood. The introduction of the minibuses will transform the children's lives.

Sands Lane: there was a planning application for 80 plus houses. Cllr Mayes with other Councillors and the local MP lobbied national government for changes to the 5-year land supply requirement, which was successful. The planning application has since been refused. The applicant may appeal this decision. Also, a change of government may change the requirement for a 5-year land supply again.

Cllr Mayes reported that she is in contact with the owner of Furlong Close and also the Friends of Furlong Close and is pleased that residents continue to live there.

The other main issue was flooding. There has been 220% more rain this year than ever before.

Wiltshire wide view: other authorities are going bust. Wiltshire Council is in good shape. Wiltshire Council's aim is to improve social mobility and ensure everything is for the long term. They have carried out a lot of preventative work. If children's service and

adults are okay, everything else follows. Then the Council can release more capital to invest in the roads. There is an extra £10million to invest in highways. That work is beginning to happen. It is WC's absolute intention to keep improving the highways.

Member of the audience thanked Cllr Mayes; Jon and Kate Gray, Geraldine White, Robin Eccles for their work on preventing the planning application to build on land at Sands Lane.

Q: if local people object to a planning application, can it still get pushed through the planning department. Cllr Mayes responded that planning policies are put in place to favour development.

A full copy of Cllr Mayes report is attached to the minutes.

3. Presentation of the Parish Council accounts for 2023/24

Please see attached for financial analysis.

4. Looking forward – 2024-25 Precept – priorities for the Parish Council for the coming year.

In January 2024, the Parish Council voted to increase the precept by 4%. The total amount requested was £40,553.64. This equates to an annual increase of £3.14 for a Band D house, making the annual payment of £81.61 to Rowde Parish Council through Council tax provision.

The Parish Council still wishes to create a footpath in Tanis. There may also be legal fees which have to be covered in this year.