****

**Minutes of the meeting of Stratton Audley Parish Council held on Wednesday 25th January 2023 in the Red Lion Public House starting at 7.00pm.**

**Present:**  Mr J Honsinger (Chairman), Mr A Flack (Vice Chairman), Mrs K Walker

Mr M Arroyo, and Mr J Edwards.

**Apologies:** Mr M Gore and Cllr I Corkin (CDC and OCC)

**Members of the public:** 6 including the resident who has recently conducted a survey of attitudes towards the solar farm.

**Also Present**: Cllr B Wood (CDC)

1. **Public Participation**

Residents who attended expressed concern at proposals to develop a solar farm on the outskirts of the Village towards Godington. It was suggested that there were concerns that the development would damage the character of the local landscape, and be visually intrusive for ramblers walking the adjoining footpaths. While the developers had agreed to carry out landscaping with “mature native trees” it would take some 15 years for these to grow sufficiently to obscure the view of the solar panels. Battery storage would generate a significant amount of noise in the immediate vicinity and the use of batteries for energy storage was in itself a significant fire hazard. There was also concern that the development would affect agricultural land at a time when self sufficiency with food production was increasingly essential, and the proposed electricity connection was prohibitively expensive in the context of the size of the proposal.

Cllr Wood explained the planning process, which he observed, was a balance between harm and benefit, and confirmed that he would represent the parish of Stratton Audley in the local authority planning process.

The local resident who carried out the independent survey explained that, out of some 200 potential respondents, he had received 54 returns, with responses varying from strong support to strong opposition. He is still hoping more residents will fill out his short survey on line, the link for which is: <https://strattonaudley.us20.list-manage.com/track/click?u=dc731ec8d4fe9e9e2d51410a9&id=d01be10872&e=daefa5541d>

It was noted that the final date for public comments to be sent to Cherwell District Council was 9th February, and everyone is urged to register their view on the planning application site which is: <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/planning/Display/22/03873/F?cuuid=B12BB8BE-D34C-4A1E-88D5-CED0AA868DF2>

1. **Planning Matters**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [**22/03873/F**](https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/Planning/Display/22/03873/F) | Land North And  Adjacent To Mill  Lane  Stratton Audley | Installation and operation of a renewable energy generating station  comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays and  battery-based electricity storage containers together with a switchgear  container, inverter/transformer units, Site access, internal access tracks,  security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure and  landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. |

This matter was brought forward in the meeting to facilitate and allow members of the public to listen to councillors express their views.

It was noted that CDC had been informed that the designated ward on the application was incorrect and put down as Launton and Otmoor and the parish recorded as Godington.

After a full discussion in front of members of the parish, councillors one by one expressed their individual views, how they had balanced this with what they felt was best for and as a representative of the parish. They agreed unanimously that they would oppose the application and amongst the reasons given were the following:

The proposed site was unsatisfactory, it being on agriculture land, which although classified as Grade 3b is nevertheless capable of being used to grow crops and is used each year as such;

Too much agricultural land is being given up to developments, too easily, because of the clamour to find new sources of energy;

Despite the merits of solar energy it is felt that brown field sites should be utilised first and foremost:

The impact on local wildlife and the residents who enjoy the public rights of way will be detrimental despite the mitigation measures proposed;

It would have significant effects on the community, not only in the construction phase but predominantly in the decades to come with the whole parish becoming a less desirable place to live;

However councillors agreed to draw up a list of mitigation measures required, should CDC decide to approve the application.

# Declarations of Interest

None.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as circulated.

# Progress on Parish Matters

**New VAS Units**

Replacement cameras have now been installed on Mill Road and Launton Road.

**Bicester Motion Experience Quarter Conditions**

Ongoing.

**Beryl’s bench**

Ongoing.

**Parking on verges in Bicester Road**

It was again noted that there are two cars parked on the verge in the Bicester Road, outside their property’s boundary. The matter has been reported to the Highway Authority.

**Highways Signs on A4421**

Ongoing with Highways

**EWR Widlife items**

Cllr Walker advised that EWR had confirmed funding for five insect hotels to be supplied

**Kids Safety Poster**

These are available to take in the Stoke Lyne Bus Shelter

**55. Finance**

The Parish Council’s current financial position is shown at Appendix A.

The Council approved the following payments:-

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Payee* | *Reason* | *Amount* |
| Mrs A Davies | Salary and expenses | 551.34 |
| HMRC | Cl tax | 45.80 |
| The Red Lion | Room hire (incl. extra for heating) | 30.00 |
| The Red Lion | Christmas event | 60.00 |
| J Honsinger | Print expenses | 41.15 |
| M Gore | Grass cutting | 125.00 |

The Parish Council considered its budget. In consideration of the current economic situation and the reserves that are held it was agreed to set a precept of £12,271, which retains the payment levied on band “D” properties at the same level as 2022/23

1. **Other Parish Issues**

**Village Road Sweep**

This was delayed due to the vehicle being out of service because of the cold weather before Christmas, and is now expected to take place shortly.

**OCC 20mph speed limit in Villages**

OCC’s consultation will be closing shortly.

**Christmas Activities**

An event was held on Christmas Eve but it was not well attended on this occasion.

**Village Improvement Fund**

Suggestions recently received include resurfacing footpaths in the area. The path west of the farm is currently being costed

**OCC/EWR Road Reparations**

OCC and EWR are in discussion about the re instatement of the road from the A4421 to Poundon. Some repairs will be carried out shortly but the more major ones, like the removal of passing bays will happen later in the year.

**Coronation celebrations**

National festivities are scheduled for the 5th to 7th May. The Parish Council agreed to organise a street party in Church Street on Sunday 7th May subject to obtaining a street closure notice. This would be similar to the one held for the Platinum Jubilee and volunteers are sought to help organise the event.

**Community Fund Ideas**

One member of the community has put forward the idea of helping to restore the footpath to the west end of the pond to make it walkable in winter. This will be investigated with the landowner and costed. Other footpaths may also be assessed and discussions held with OCC footpath officers.

# Correspondence received - to note any correspondence received not otherwise on the agenda where decisions are not required.

CDC/OCC/OALC updates

1. **AOB**

None.

# Reports from meetings - to receive any reports for information.

None.

# Items for information or next Agenda

# Items as soon as possible please.

# Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be 1st March 2023 in the Red Lion at 7.00pm.

[www.strattonaudley.org](http://www.strattonaudley.org) See also Facebook – strattonaudleyparishcouncil

