

Annual Parish Meeting of Iron Acton 2023

Minutes of Iron Acton Annual Parish Meeting held on 6th March 2023 at 7.30pm Held Iron Acton Parish Hall

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

5 members of the public were present.

Councillor's Councillor D Smith (DS)

Councillor L Noble (LN)

Councillor R Lomas (RL)

Councillor Edmonds

Councillor Chapman

South Glos Councillor's Tristan Clark, John Lean & Claire Young

WELCOME SPEECH

Councilor C Spedding (CS) the Chairman of Iron Acton Parish Council introduced herself and gave a welcome speech and outlined the procedure and the purpose of the Annual Parish Meeting.

01-03-23* APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Wright

02-03-23* TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2022 had been previously circulated. Councillor Noble proposed and Councillor Edmonds seconded that these minutes be adopted and signed as a true record. **All Agreed**

03-03-23* CHAIRMANS REPORT

Chairman Councillor Spedding Report - Annual Parish Meeting 06.03.2023

- Parish Maintenance throughout the Parish
- Tree planting around the Parish and Jubilee tree and plaque
- MUGA project and additional grants received of approx. £55,000.00
- Work in Chill Wood for the management plan
- Beat surgeries, Parish Council funding the cost of the room hire
- Website and accessibility improvements
- Traffic safety measures at Nibley Lane
- New benches in the Parish Meadows
- Call for new Councillors and elections in May
- Plans for the Coronation
- Network Rail and emergency work required
- Reduction of bus services for the Parish

- Thanks given to all the organisations in the Parish, the Parish Council members and clerk.

04-03-23* SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCILLOR'S REPORTS

South Gloucestershire Councillors Report – Report Appendix A

05-03-23* QUESTIONS / REPRESENTATIONS SUBMITTED

Iron Acton School report – Appendix B

North Road School report – Appendix C

Floral Friends report – Appendix D

Iron Acton Cinema report – Appendix E

Local Poyntz – Verbal Report

Acton Aid report – Verbal Report

CS advised that all subsequent questions and queries that could not be answered on the night or required any further action would be looked at the next PC meeting.

Questions Raised

- No questions raised

Points Raised

- Tree planting in Chill Wood, concerns raised that the saplings had not been given enough protection in order to flourish

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:46pm

Signed.....

Dated.....

Appendix A

District Councillors' Report

Monday 6th March 2023

Bus Service Withdrawals and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)

In the last year, following the withdrawal of the financial support the government provided bus companies during the pandemic and its aftermath, we have seen swingeing cuts to bus services across the West of England. This has been driven by sharp increases in the cost of fuel, lower passenger numbers due to unreliable services, as well as a chronic shortage of drivers due to better contracts being available in the haulage industry. There are currently 250 vacancies for bus drivers across the region.

The Y3 service was withdrawn in October. Now the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) has been forced to cut the number of supported, commercially unviable bus services from the start of the 2023/24 financial year. This is because the budget from the transport levy, provided by the three constituent local authorities (South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council and Bath & North East Somerset Council), has not kept up with the high rate of inflation in the public transport sector. The Stagecoach 622 and 626 services, as a consequence of this, will be withdrawn on 2nd April. The villages of Iron Acton, Engine Common, Rangeworthy and Tytherington will not have access to any bus service.

For a two year period, starting on 3rd April, the West of England, working in partnership with Via and WeDRT, will be trialling Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) under the name WESTlink. This minibus trial is being funded from £105m of funding awarded to the West of England and North Somerset Council, by the Department for Transport, for their *Bus Services Improvement Plan* (BSIP). Due to the conditions attached to the BSIP funding it must be used to fund new services and cannot be used to support existing bus routes. Under DRT residents will book a journey, either through an app or by telephone, and be given a pickup time from a nearby bus stop. Journeys can be anywhere within one of WESTlinks DRT zones and passengers are able, at the same time, to book a return journey later in the day. DRT is not allowed to compete with existing services nor will journeys follow a fixed route. They will, however, connect rural villages to major transport hubs (e.g. Yate, Thornbury, etc.) and facilitate longer journeys across the West of England.

There have been calls for WECA to explore bringing the regional bus network back under public control via bus franchising. Last year Bristol City Council passed a motion calling for franchising to be examined. A report before the Cabinet of Bath & North East Somerset Council this week recommends formally asking Dan Norris, the West of England Mayor, to commission an independent review of options for bus franchising in the West of England. Franchising would take years to establish nor would it, by itself, resolve the driver shortage but the collapse of the regional bus network underlines the vital importance of such a review.

Planning Appeals

This year South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) has suffered two significant appeal defeats – Land South of Badminton Rd, Old Sodbury and Land West of Park Farm, Thornbury – that are likely to have a significant impact until the next Local Plan is submitted for public examination.

In the former appeal the Planning Inspector ruled that, as SGC has not carried out a methodical review of all defined settlement boundaries within the authority in 30 years, those boundaries should be considered to be out of date. In the latter appeal a different Inspector determined that SGC can only demonstrate a housing land supply of 4.77 years rather than 5 years as the government requires. Both Inspectors independently concluded that the spatial strategy set out in SGC's adopted planning documents, the *Core Strategy* and the *Policies, Sites & Places Plan*, are out of date and that the tilted balance set out in paragraph 11d) ii) of the *National Planning Policy Framework* should be applied. This states there should be a presumption in favour granting planning permission unless “**any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits**”.

There is a strong likelihood that SGC, as a Local Planning Authority, is going to have to start regularly applying the tilted balance when arriving at planning decisions. Even if SGC, in the coming months, can increase its housing land supply to 5 years the tilted balance will still come into play due to the settlement boundaries being out of date. This is unlikely to change until the new Local Plan is in what is termed “an advanced stage” (i.e. it has been formally submitted for public examination). As the *Local Plan Delivery Programme* only envisages submitting the draft Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination in August 2024 there is likely to be an increase in speculative applications and appeals in the intervening period. There are strong incentives for developers to pursue this path rather than wait for the Local Plan to be adopted. Land outside of the Green Belt but close to the current settlement boundaries is particularly vulnerable. In Engine Common precisely this type of speculative application has been recently submitted; P23/00742/PIP is a Permission in Principle application to build 9 dwellings West of North Rd on land immediately to the North of the current Cotswold Homes development being built on Lodge Rd.

Nibley Lane Safety Measures

We walked along Nibley Lane, back in 2021, with parish councillors and parishioners worried about the safety of residents, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders using the lane. Following that, working in conjunction with the parish council, we drafted and submitted a *Highways Investigation Scheme Request* for road safety measures along Nibley Lane (including its possible closure to motor vehicles). To support that petition we submitted a petition to SGC signed by residents and held a site meeting with Cllr Steve Reade (Conservative Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment & Strategic Infrastructure). Unfortunately, we were informed by officers that the request was not included in the list of investigation schemes funded in 2022 as it had not scored highly enough to be progressed.

The parish council has now undertaken a survey on Nibley Lane to ascertain whether there is wide support for investigating its closure to motor vehicles. The results of this survey shall support the submission of a new *Highways Investigation Scheme Request*; it is evidence that will strengthen the case for further investigation.

We will continue to press officers to consider including the scheme for investigation in the forthcoming financial year.

Appendix B

Iron Acton CEVC Primary School

Iron Acton Primary School currently has 99 pupils on role with the majority of year groups either full or oversubscribed. It employs 28 dedicated members of staff, some of whom are on multiple contracts, has a full complement of governors (16 in total) and a supportive and proactive parent body. A number of volunteers attend regularly to provide class-based support.

Our successes over the past year have been:

- Welcoming 15 new Reception child to our school in September along with several other families in other year groups, ensuring our sustainability into the future.
- Provision of a nurturing and supportive learning environment to our families, many of whom face significant daily challenges.
- Excellent Key Stage 2 SATs results where progress in reading and writing was significantly above average.
- Receiving Gold award for being a Green Tree School as part of the Woodland Trusts initiative to improve outdoor learning provision.
- Receiving the Bronze award from Modeshift Stars which aims to promote active travel to and from school.
- Continuing to strengthen our meaningful link with St James the Less Church which has resulted in being awarded the Church School Partnership award from Bristol Diocese.

Our priorities over the past year have been to:

- Further strengthen our curriculum offer so that children demonstrate an excellent understanding of all areas covered with a focus on history, geography and music.
- Review and refine approaches to the teaching of maths to ensure progress is as strong as it is for reading and writing.
- Reflect on equalities, diversity and representation through the curriculum.
- Introduce a new phonics scheme in line with updated Government recommendations.
- Promote positive mental and physical health.
- Review and refine our behaviour policy to ensure it supports the needs of our current cohorts.
- Support our teachers to grow their skills as subject leaders.

We continue to be a happy, successful and positive school which is very much a part of the village and the parish. Everyone who is a part of our school community strives to ensure the children have the best possible experience during their time with us so that they leave with the skills they need for the next stage of their education and beyond.

Appendix C

North Road Community Primary School

North Road Community Primary School was visited by OFSTED at the end of October 2023 for a two-day graded inspection. We were delighted and very proud to share the news of our 'good' grading in all areas with families and the local community at the end of November.

Since the inspection, we have continued to work on our school priorities for this academic year, which include the development of our history curriculum. Our aim is to increase our teaching of local history, to form the building blocks for learning about national and worldwide historical events.

This past year, we have further increased and strengthened our links with the local community and have been very fortunate to be supported by local artists, developers and companies in the improvement of our school grounds, playground and outdoor teaching areas. We have also increased our partnerships with local stores through the Neighbourly project, which pairs local shops and companies with the school. Through this work, we have been able to continue to provide weekly fresh and long-life provisions to families in need. The impact of the covid pandemic is still being felt by some families and this has been compounded by the current 'cost of living' crisis. We have also very much appreciated the support this year from the local parish church and Acton Aid, which has enabled us to support families in a variety of ways and has made a huge difference to home and school life for pupils.

Recently, we have been excited to welcome the newest member of our school family to North Road. We have started a partnership with Pets as Therapy and welcome Edith, a blonde Labrador, along with her owner, Lizzie, into school every week. Edith is a trained therapy dog who listens to children read aloud, helping them to develop reading skills and increase self-confidence and a love of reading. Her visits also have a very positive effect on the well-being of all members of our school community — including staff!

Currently our school family is full, with 106 pupils on roll. We have received 64 applications for places for Reception 2023 and will look forward to making contact with our new families in the coming months.

On our staff team, we have two Early Careers Teachers employed at North Road Community Primary School. One teacher is in her first year of teaching and the other

has recently started the second year of her teaching career. Through making links with the teaching team at Iron Acton Primary School, a joint visit to Chill Woods will be taking place at the start of March. The schools will also be joining together for a parade in celebration of the King's Coronation, as well as the annual May Football Derby. Pupils from North Road are also busy preparing for the Iron Acton May Day celebrations, with 24 children participating in weekly maypole dancing lessons.

At North Road Community Primary School, we are very proud to have received a Gold Health in School Award and the Music Mark Award for our commitment to the teaching of music and singing. We are also currently in the process of completing our applications for a Mental Health and Well-Being Award, as well as The Bristol Standard which recognises excellence in the teaching of The Early Years.

Appendix D

Floral Friends

The Planting that we have done over the last few years in Station Road and The Parish Meadows has taken well. The Parish Green is not too bad but Frampton End Road has been disappointing.

There are plans afoot to make a small pond in the meadows.

Appendix E

Cinema Club

The film club resumed normal service in the latest season which has just ended. We still arranged tables and chairs in the hall as this proved popular with members. In the last season we showed:

The Phantom of the Opera
Belfast
Operation Mincemeat
Fisherman's Friends; One and All
Mrs Harris goes to Paris
Elvis

The next season will begin in October, showing one film per month until March 2024. Anyone is welcome to join and if you wish to be added to our contact list, please email me at simoncross321@gmail.com