

## NEROCHE PARISH COUNCIL

### **Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Neroche Parish Council held at the Neroche Village Hall on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 7.30pm.**

**Members Present:** Cllrs. Aplin, Bell, Knight, Macey, Palmer, C. Parsons, J Parsons and Street.

**In Attendance:** Clerk J Wanstall, Cllr John Thorne, Cllr Ross Henley and 15 parishioners.

#### **2021/42 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received by Cllr Vacher and Cllr Pope.

It was resolved that the absence of this Councillors be recognised as approved absences for the purposes of s.185 Local Government Act 1972.

#### **2021/43 Declarations of interest and dispensations**

None reported

#### **2021/44 Authorization of adding 2 new signatories to the NPC bank account**

Due to the resignation of Cllr Bray, we need new signatories on the Neroche Parish Council bank account. Cllr Palmer and Cllr J Parsons have offered to do this. All present agreed with the addition of these two new signatories.

#### **2021/45 A358 Link Roads**

Since our last Extraordinary Meeting in April to discuss the A358, there have been a few changes to the proposals from National Highways (NH), previously known as Highways England. In April, NH were proposing to close Bickenhall Lane and have a bridge from our villages, on the road that leads to Capland (referred to as Staple Fitzpaine Road).

The outcome of our NPC Extraordinary April meeting was that, although we deemed both roads unsuitable to be the main route linking our villages to the A358, we agreed with NH proposal. When choosing between the two roads, it was the preferred option to close Bickenhall Lane as the Staple Fitzpaine Road is better for farmers and those driving larger vehicles.

However, the updated proposal now from NH, is that now both these roads remain open, with a bridge also from Bickenhall Lane to the A358. The main reason for this change is believed to be to allow improved access for farmers.

Since meeting in April, surrounding villages have been very proactive, in campaigning to NH to make changes to the proposed route. There are now 12 villages, who have joined forces together, and they wish NPC to join them. To date, we have refused this offer, as one of the changes they wished to see, was to have both Bickenhall Lane and Staple Fitzpaine Road both remain open. This was deemed to be to the detriment of our villages, due to the increased traffic we will experience and the danger that Bickenhall and Staple Fitzpaine would be a rat run, while the other villages would potentially become quieter.

The main reason for the meeting today, is to review our stance on joining the other villages against NH, or to stand on our own. Much discussion was had on this topic, with polarising views on both sides. Whilst all present agreed with the 12 parishes, that we could see the benefits to dualling the A358, like them, we do not want it to be turned into a superhighway, with a national speed limit, where access roads to villages are removed.

The Councillors then took a vote on whether to join forces with the other parishes. The vote was 7 against and 1 vote for, so the decision has been made not to join them. Following the vote, it was discussed what are next steps should be, and how we can be more proactive and have our voice heard within NH.

It is important that we have more input from our parishioners, so to that end, we are setting up a Working Group. This will focus on liaising with our parishioners, both home and business owners, so we can fully represent the views of the Neroche Villages. In the next few weeks, we will be asking for everybody's thoughts and input on the link roads into Bickenhall, so we can put together a response to NH.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm