

FINDERN PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Kate Sharpe

Findern Parish Rooms, Lower Green, Findern, Derbyshire DE65 6AS

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Minutes of the Public Meeting – Purchase of land off Common Piece Lane held at Methodist Chapel, Lower Green, Findern at 7.00pm on 30 January 2020

Present: Councillors T Brown, M Goodall, J Hibbert, M Ratcliffe, C Smith and M Woodhouse.

Also present: Mrs K Sharpe (Clerk) and members of the public.

The minutes of the meeting were recorded for accuracy.

2438/20 Background – update from previous public meeting

Councillor Radcliffe gave the public some background information to set the context of the meeting.

A public meeting had been held on 1 October 2019 to discuss with the public the proposed purchase of the land by the Parish Council. That meeting had confirmed that the Parish Council had the support of the public in attendance to purchase the land, and also generated lots of ideas of what the land could be used for.

The Parish Council was tasked with firming up plans of what they would use the land for and then hold a further public meeting that should be advertised more widely.

At that time the Parish Council had been advised the land would be coming up for auction at some point. The Parish Council had tried to buy the land through the agent, with an offer of £15,000, which was the maximum figure the budget could allow. The offer was rejected and the Parish Council were advised that it would be sold at auction at a future date.

The land is now listed for auction on 14 February with a guide price of £30,000.

2439/20 Should the Parish Council purchase the land?

Councillor Radcliffe spoke on the reasons why the Parish Council has resolved to try to buy the land - to ensure it is kept for the people of Findern.

If successful, the Parish Council would consult with residents about the amenities they would like to have in the village on that site, which would ensure the area was open to the public and used for the community. With the Parish Council's limited budget, the challenge would be in purchasing the land.

The Parish Council know that if successful in purchasing the land, there are funding streams it could access to actually deliver on the plans for allotments and public community space.

There was general agreement amongst the public present at the meeting that the Parish Council should try to purchase the land.

2440/20 What would it be used for?

The favoured option at the first public meeting on October had been allotments. Therefore, Councillor Radcliffe had invited two representatives from The Ashbourne Road District Allotment Association to give a 15-minute presentation on their association and how they have worked with their community to develop their allotment site. They spoke about how they had developed their site to attract a different demographic of allotment holder. Their model - a mixture of small and starter plots - was recommended as a proposal for the Common Piece Lane area. They outlined the need for a management committee, and emphasised this was hard but rewarding work.

Councillor Radcliffe had prepared a plan of the proposed site with self-managed small and starter allotments, an arboretum area, with communal orchard and a planted wetland walk for the lower end of the site with special species. The whole site would be low maintenance and have secure access. The plans are just a proposal and if successful in purchasing the land, the Parish Council would continue to consult with the public on the development of the plans for the land.

2441/20 Subscription from residents – how will this work?

The Clerk then spoke on the need for financial help from the public. The Parish Council only had a budget of £15,000 to purchase the land because of other projects that it was committed to in the village.

Wirksworth Town Council recently held a subscription campaign in their town to buy a piece of green belt land for their community. This had been successful and Findern Parish Council would use their model to try raise the money to buy this land.

Leaflets were distributed with the details of the scheme and with a pledge form that had to be returned to the Parish Council by 5pm on Friday 7 February with a cheque or pledge towards the fund. Cheques would not be deposited in the Council's bank account unless the land was purchased by the Parish Council. Cheques would be returned if the Council was unsuccessful. Pledges would be confidential with names or amounts being known by no person other than the Clerk. All personal information would be held as per the Council's Data Protection policy.

A show of hands gave an indication that the majority were in favour of the subscription.

Public Questions

The main public concern was around who will buy the land at auction.

There are small existing allotments along Common Piece Lane, will these be maintained? - Yes, these would not be altered or impacted upon.

Parking area only 8 cars. Already a parking problem in area. Would 8 spaces be enough? – The number of spaces could be reviewed.

How many allotments would be available? - 7 starter ones and 14 larger ones. Don't have figures on how many want them. Just a proposal at this stage

Could the Parish Council use any contingency funds? – Due to other commitments, £15,000 is the maximum the Parish Council can commit. There is a large project that is about to be delivered which will take up a large part of the reserve.

Could the Parish Council raise additional funding on Precept? – The Council has already set the Precept for 2020/21 and communicated this to South Derbyshire. Earliest we could look at raising funds through Precept is 2021/22. Also, there is a reluctance to raise funds for the land this way as it would impact on the whole village.

Could South Derbyshire District Council provide additional funds? – Timescales don't allow much time to apply for these. Funding may be available for the intended work.

Can the Parish Council block the purchase if land is purchased by certain people? - No, it is not possible for the PC to veto land purchase. It would be a matter for the District Council to control any applications for use.

Could it be used for access to land behind? - the land behind the 1.2 acre piece has been Identified in the strategic plan for development by South Derbyshire / Derby City with a note that the land behind could be potentially built on and therefore a developer may purchase this land for access to the land behind.

Have the Parish Council thought of crowdfunding? – There are rules around what a Parish Council can and can't do, but Clerk could go look in to this.

Have the Parish Council tried to buy the land before the auction? - The Parish Council have already attempted to purchase the land, unsuccessfully. If the pledges are significant the Parish Council may try to negotiate a purchase before the auction.

Would businesses contribute to the fund? – The Councillors would drop leaflets into and speak with businesses. There is a very short time frame to raise awareness.

Could social media be used to raise awareness? – The Parish Council will post to website and also the Parish Council Facebook page and the Community Facebook page.

What funding would be available to help develop site? – There are several funds available that the Parish Council can apply to – particularly for environmental projects.

Has the Parish Council requested a valuation of the land? - Yes, and this was estimated at around £15,000

Could people loan money to the Parish Council? - The Clerk would need to check out whether a Parish Council is allowed to take loans in this way.

Could the Parish Council appeal to owners to sell the land to the Parish Council? - A lot of the owners of the land are 2nd generation, and not living in village, therefore, they have no attachment and just want the most money they can get.

2443/20

Actions agreed

In response to the public's opinion that all residents and businesses in the village should be contacted about pledging money, it was decided that the Parish Council would print and distribute leaflets to every property over the weekend.

Clerk would contact Derbyshire Association of Local Councils to explore whether the Parish Council could use Crowdfunding as a way of raising funds. Also, whether a loan system was possible.