

MINUTES of the first WHITWICK ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on THURSDAY 17 MAY 2012 at the St John the Baptist C of E School, Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick

Present: Councillor D Howe (Deputy Parish Council Chairman) (In the Chair)

Parish Cllrs A Barker, S Colledge, E Easom, D Everitt, L Spence, J Straw and L Weaver

Mr P Ellis, Parish Clerk

Mrs L Ellis, Assistant Parish Clerk

PCs 6672 Sorrell and 6627 Willdig, Leicestershire Constabulary

Rhonda Dean, Whitwick Community Enterprises

4 members of the public

1. INTRODUCTION

Phil Ellis, Clerk to the Parish Council, explained that having obtained parish status, Whitwick was now required to hold an annual parish meeting. All electors of the Parish were entitled to attend and raise any matters concerning Whitwick. The meeting was also open to the press and public. The Chairman of the Parish Council was responsible for calling the meeting and chaired it if present. In his absence, the Deputy Chairman of the Parish Council was required to chair the meeting as was the case on this occasion.

2. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Ray Woodward, Chairman of Whitwick Parish Council, had published his Annual Report on the first year of the Parish Council's existence. This had been posted on the Parish Council's website and hard copies were available at the meeting.

The Report reflected on what had been achieved in the first year when the emphasis had been on getting the basic structures in place. It also looked ahead to the Council's aspirations which included seeking 'Quality Parish' status before the 2015 elections; securing the transfer of parks, recreation grounds and open spaces from NWLDC; keeping the options for joint working with other urban parishes under review; facilitating a community consultation/community planning process once the outcome of the Stephenson Green planning inquiry was known; establishing its own office and providing a dedicated notice board in a strategic location.

3. COMMUNITY POLICING

PC Sorrell reported that historically, crime rates in the parish were low. There had recently been 14 community-orientated crimes involving theft etc. The previously

reported spike in theft of catalytic converters from 4x4 vehicles in the area had now been successfully addressed. The past week had seen a spate of burglaries from properties, garages and sheds in the Thomas Road area though an arrest was thought to be imminent. He also referred to the so-called 'Pink Lady', a trans-gender individual, who had been interviewed but had declined offers of help and had now left the area. Overall, the parish was enjoying a reasonably good period with regard to community safety.

As previously discussed with the Parish Council, a 'Fatal4' operation was being planned in the area by the Road Policing Unit and he expected dates and locations to be agreed very shortly. This would target speeding; mobile phone usage; drink/drugs and seatbelt usage. He confirmed that offenders would be given fixed penalty tickets and/or education and that a report would be made back to the Parish Council on the outcomes.

In reply to a question, he confirmed that the Police did attend domestic incidents but often had to refer aspects of the problems on to other agencies.

The Chairman thanked PCs Sorrell and Willdig for attending the meeting.

4. WHITWICK COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES

Rhonda Dean explained that this had evolved from the original coffee shop project. They were now involved in a variety of projects but had no core funding so had to seek grants and other funding opportunities wherever they could. They had expanded to employ 23 staff which could increase further next year.

Their activities could be summarised under 5 headings:

- The original coffee shop which was still operational and included room hire
- Community Connections (North West Leicestershire), a third sector training consortium which provided Special Needs supported work experience and district-wide provision for young NEETs (not in education or training)
- Party in the Park – an annual community event which would be held again on 1 September 2012
- The proposed Community Centre – this was very much still alive and consultants had helped to reshape the bid for funding.
- Community Newspaper – a new project which it was hoped to launch before Party in the Park. The Parish Council was invited to submit articles.

She had also been approached regarding a proposed community project which would compare attitudes in Whitwick with those in the Belgrave area of Leicester and was looking for interested people to help carry this forward.

A parish councillor drew attention to the move to academy status by many schools and suggested that the possibility of encouraging a social enterprise to bid for local school catering contracts be investigated.

5. ISSUES FROM THE FLOOR

(a) A member of the public asked for further elaboration regarding the need for a parish council office and when and where this might be set up. The Parish Clerk explained that whilst he saw no immediate operational need for a separate office, the situation would change as and when the land transfer from NWLDC was effected. The initial target date for this was the end of the year though it was unclear whether NWLDC would actually achieve this. The Council had already looked at shared use of the Youth Club building; the possible conversion of the Market Place public conveniences was currently under investigation; the proposed new community centre would present opportunities for hiring a room and, notwithstanding the Council's strong opposition to the Stephenson Green proposal, if the development was allowed on appeal, the Council would have to look what advantages could be gained for Whitwick which might include provision of a parish council office and meeting room.

The questioner commented further that the youth club had been built for youth purposes only and that for the parish council to take it over would go against the basis of the funding.

Parish Councillor Colledge responded as former Chairman of the Steering Group that had campaigned for the setting up of the Parish Council. The Steering Group had originally been invited by the Youth Club to consider using the building for Parish Council purposes to provide an alternative source of income at a time when County Council funding was being cut. This had been on the basis of possible joint arrangements for the joint benefit of both organisations and there had been no question of the parish council taking over at the expense of the youth club. No decisions had yet been taken as the Parish Council was waiting for NWLDC to establish its title to a number of sites prior to transfer.

(b) Another member of the public referred to a publication by the National Forest which referred to adjoining communities but not Whitwick. She undertook to supply the Parish Council with a copy of the publication in question to enable the Clerk to raise the issue with the National Forest Company.

The meeting terminated at 7.42pm

MINUTES of the ANNUAL MEETING of WHITWICK PARISH COUNCIL held on THURSDAY 17 MAY 2012 at the St John the Baptist C of E School, Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick.

Present: Councillor D Howe (Deputy Chairman) (In the Chair)

Cllrs A Barker, S Colledge, E Easom, D Everitt, L Spence, J Straw and L Weaver

In Attendance:

Mr P Ellis, Clerk

Mrs L Ellis, Assistant Clerk

5 members of the public

139. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved: That Councillor R Woodward be elected Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2012/13

140. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Resolved: That Councillor D Howe be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Parish Council for the municipal year 2012/13

(Councillor Howe signed the declaration of acceptance of office and, in the absence of the Chairman, remained in the Chair)

141. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Clerk reported receipt of apologies for absence from Councillors Gillard, Pearson and Woodward

142. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors D Everitt and D Howe declared personal and prejudicial interests in Minute No 149 (Planning Matters) as members of NWLDC's Planning Committee

143. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions from members of the public.

.....Chairman's initials/signature

144. MINUTES**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 April 2012 as previously circulated be approved as a correct record

145. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES**Resolved: That the following be reappointed for 2012/13:**

(a) Staffing Committee with delegated powers to institute disciplinary procedures and hear grievances. Membership to comprise Councillor Woodward (Chairman) and Councillors Colledge and Weaver.

(b) Appeal Committee with delegated powers to hear and decide on appeals lodged. Membership to comprise Councillor Howe (Chairman) and Councillors Barker and Easom.

146. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2012/13

Resolved: That the following schedule of meetings be approved for the municipal year 2012/13:

28 June, 30 August, 18 October, 6 December, 17 January, 7 March, 18 April, 16 May (annual)

147. AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2011/12**(a) Internal Auditor's Report**

The Clerk submitted the report of Richard Willcocks, the Council's appointed Internal Auditor, for the financial year ended 31 March 2012 (copy previously circulated and attached to the official copy of the minutes).

Members noted the conclusion that the Council was fully compliant and the positive comments regarding the work that had already been successfully put in place creating a solid base for the Council to move forward.

Resolved:

(i) That the report be received and the recommendations contained be adopted

(ii) That Richard Willcocks be engaged as the Council's Internal Auditor for 2012/13 at a fee of £150 + VAT plus 45p per mile travelling expenses.

.....Chairman's initials/signature

(b) Audit Timetable

The Clerk reported that Clement Keys had appointed 2 July 2012 as the date on or after which interested persons might exercise their rights under the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011. To comply with the specified timetable, public notice had been given on 14 May and the Council was required to specify 'a convenient place' where the accounts were available for inspection between 29 May and 29 June. Councillor Colledge had kindly offered the use of her shop for this purpose.

Resolved: That Colledge's Florist, 24 Silver Street, Whitwick be designated as the place where interested persons may inspect the Council's accounts

(c) Accounting Statement

The Clerk reported that the Council was required to approve the Accounting Statement to 31 March 2012 (copy previously circulated and attached to the official copy of the minutes).

Resolved: That the Accounting Statement for the year ended 31 March 2012 be approved

(d) Annual Governance Statement

The Clerk reported that the Council was required to complete the Annual Governance Statement to 31 March 2012. It was the responsibility of the Council as a whole to answer the questions contained in the Section 2 form (copy previously circulated and attached to the official copy of the minutes).

Resolved: That the Annual Governance Statement be completed with the answer 'yes' to statements 1 to 8 and 'not applicable' to statement 9

(e) Review of System of Internal Control

The Clerk reported that the Internal Audit Report pointed out that "*external auditors Clement Keys have in the past year issued reminders to some parish councils regarding the revised Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 (Regulation 4). This particular regulation states that parish councils must conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control. What this means is that the Council (i.e. members of the Council) undertakes a review to ensure that what internal controls are said to be operative (e.g. according to the internal audit report) are in fact in place and working satisfactorily. In practice this could mean, for example, ensuring that bank reconciliations are carried out regularly, the cash book is kept up to date etc. Clement Keys also advise that this review is best undertaken*

.....Chairman's initials/signature

in conjunction with the signing off of section 2 (Governance) of the Annual Return. Having undertaken the review the outcome should be minuted.”

Internal Auditor’s Recommendation: *that the Council considers undertaking this review along the lines suggested above and continues to undertake it on an annual basis.*

Resolved: That the Chairman continue to be responsible for checking and verifying the figures contained in the quarterly financial statements presented to the Council

148. ANNUAL REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Members were invited to review the following:

- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations

Internal Auditor’s Recommendation: *(1) that the de-minimus limit for competitive purchases is increased from £100 to a more realistic and workable £300 (2) that a review is undertaken of the current £10,000 limit for competitive tenders to be provided. (An increase to £50,000 is suggested).*

- Risk Assessment
- Asset Register

Internal Auditor’s Recommendation: *that a minimum value (e.g. £50) be considered for items to be entered on to the asset register.*

- Freedom of Information Publication Scheme
- Media Policy
- Disability Discrimination Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Community Grants Policy
- Staff Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
- Health and Safety Policy

These had all been approved by the Council within the past year and copies were available to view on the website.

In reply to members’ questions regarding the Internal Auditor’s recommendation to increase the limit for competitive tendering, the Clerk explained that this was intended to give the Council more flexibility. Tenders required a specification to be given to all those invited so that the tender figures were all submitted on exactly the

.....Chairman’s initials/signature

same basis and the cheapest would normally win. The Council could therefore need to commit expenditure to get a professional specification prepared and would still have the opportunity to opt to do that for sums below the ceiling figure if it wished. However, one example of where it might wish to take another course was the proposed conversion of the public conveniences. Builders could be invited to submit their own ideas on how the conversion should take place and price them accordingly, giving the Council the opportunity to choose the scheme it considered most suitable but which might not be the cheapest. However, a competitive element would always be retained to ensure value for money.

Resolved:

(a) That Financial Regulations be amended to provide:

(i) that the de-minimus limit for competitive purchases is increased from £100 to £300

(ii) that the limit for competitive tenders to be increased to £50,000

(b) That the minimum value for items to be entered into the Asset Register be set at £50 but that items below this value continue to be recorded in a separate inventory

149. PLANNING MATTERS

(a) Applications

The Council had been consulted by NWLDC on the following applications:

12/00228/FUL – Erection of two storey side extension and front porch, 35 Gracedieu Road, Whitwick

12/00308/FUL – Demolition of commercial buildings, erection of 4 No two storey dwellings and part demolition of 9 Cademan Street to be rebuilt to form 1 No residential unit together with revised site access and off-street car parking for the whole development and 9 Cademan Street – Land adj 9 Cademan Street, Whitwick

12/00334/FUL – Erection of single storey scout clubhouse – land to rear of 95-107 Leicester Road, Whitwick

12/00377/FUL - Alterations and extension to dwelling including first floor level side extension – 65 Cademan Street, Whitwick

Resolved: That no objections be made to any of these applications

.....Chairman's initials/signature

(b) Decisions

NWLDC had now permitted the following applications:

12/00182/FUL – Erection of first floor side extension, 101 Gracedieu Road, Whitwick

12/00253/TPO – Height reduction of 11 Poplars and 1 Sycamore protected by TPO, 2 Lakeside View, Whitwick

Resolved: That the report be received

150. SPEEDING TRAFFIC – LOUGHBOROUGH ROAD, WHITWICK

Consideration was given to the report of the Parish Clerk (copy previously circulated and attached to the official copy of the minutes).

The Clerk further reported that the agenda for the County Council's Highways Forum for North West Leicestershire meeting on 24 May had been received earlier in the day and included a report on the use of mobile vehicle activated signs (MVAS) by parishes. This stated that there were only 19 such signs currently operational in the whole of the County and concluded that it was too early to reach firm conclusions as to the effectiveness of such signs but that anecdotal evidence suggested that reductions in speed did occur. It seemed clear from the report that the County Council would be looking to parishes to tackle speeding problems in this way in cases where there was no significant accident record as an alternative to County-funded traffic calming measures.

Members felt that it would be a massive commitment for a relatively new parish to take on an MVAS given the costs and requirements of the County Council. There were also concerns that an MVAS would be ineffective in reducing speeds. A permanent sign was considered preferable to a mobile one but local people were likely to come up with other locations where such signs were also required and the Council had yet to ascertain public priorities through the proposed community-led planning process which would be considered further once the outcome of the Stephenson Green planning inquiry was known.

Resolved: That provision of speed activated signs be included in the proposed community consultation to gauge public priorities on the issue

151. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The following accounts were submitted:

Society of Local Council Clerks – Annual subscription/joining fee - £120

Redwood Pryor – Internal audit - £180

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Resolved: That these payments be approved

152. TOWARDS QUALITY STATUS

Consideration was given to the second report of the Parish Clerk (copy previously circulated and attached to the official copy of the minutes).

In reply to a member's question, the Clerk undertook to obtain usage statistics for the Council's website. It was recognised that the proposals by Whitwick Community Enterprises for a community newspaper could help the Council to meet that criterion.

A member also suggested additional sites to display notices.

Resolved: That the report be received

153. LOCALISM ACT – GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Clerk (copy previously circulated and attached to the official copy of the minutes).

At present, it was difficult to foresee what the Council might wish to do that could not be met by existing statutory powers or the Section 137 'free resource', though members might wish to keep options open just in case.

Resolved:

(a) That the report be received

(b) That the Assistant Clerk undertake the revised Topic 7 CiLCA qualification at a cost of £20

(c) That the Clerk represent the Council at the LRALC training session 'The Localism Act and Local Councils' on 11 July at a cost of £60.

The meeting terminated at 8.25pm

.....Chairman's initials/signature