

MINUTES of a MEETING of WHITWICK PARISH COUNCIL held on THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER 2013 at the St John the Baptist C of E School, Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick.

Present: Councillor R Woodward (Chairman) (In the Chair)

Cllrs A Barker, S Colledge, D Everitt, T Gillard, D Howe, L Spence, J Straw, and L Weaver

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors E Easom and N Pearson,

In Attendance:

Mr P Ellis, Clerk and Mrs L Ellis, Assistant Clerk

10 members of the public

Declarations of Interest:

Councillor A Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 319 (Community Initiatives – Use of Section 106 Contributions) as a Governor St John the Baptist C of E Primary School

Councillor D Everitt declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 323 (Planning Matters) as a district councillor

Councillor T Gillard declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 323 (Planning Matters) as a district councillor

Councillor D Howe declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute No 323 (Planning Matters) as a member of NWLDC's Planning Committee and Minute No 331(b) (Request for Grant) as a member of the Friends of Holly Hayes Wood

Councillor L Spence declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute Nos 323(c) (Planning Matters - Leicestershire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Consultation) and 330 (School Admissions Consultation) as a County Councillor

Councillor R Woodward declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute No 323 (Planning Matters) as a district councillor and Minute No 331(b) (Request for Grant) as a member of the Friends of Holly Hayes Wood.

318. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Mr Peter Staveley, Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for the Parsonwood Hill area since 2007, attended the meeting to speak against any proposals to install play or

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exercise equipment on the Parsonwood Hill Recreation Ground. He was supported by a number of other residents.

He referred to incidents of vandalism, underage drinking and damage to neighbouring properties which had previously been experienced. He was aware of the support for exercise equipment expressed by the School and PC Broomfield but had canvassed residents and the vast majority objected to the proposals. Police cutbacks meant that rapid responses to such incidents were unlikely to happen and gave an example of a recent road traffic accident involving a drunken driver where a response time of at least one hour had been given. Bringing children from a wider area could also exacerbate the well-known parking problems at this location. Outdoor gym equipment had come bottom of the list in the recent consultation on the public's priorities and he felt that such equipment would be better sited at Whitwick Park or the Hermitage Recreation Grounds.

Other residents referred to the on-going parking problems which included residents' drives being blocked and pavement parking, particularly at the start and end of the school day.

319. COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

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

With regard to the Section 106 contributions, members took on board the concerns of Parsonwood Hill residents. It was felt that smaller pocket parks were more likely to attract anti-social behaviour and a central hub was preferable.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the proposal to site children's exercise equipment on Parsonwood Hill Recreation Ground be not pursued and that alternative sites and uses for the Section 106 contributions be sought.

(b) That for reasons of cost, no action be taken relocating the skate park or small children's play area at Whitwick Park

(c) That given the uncertainty regarding the budget, land transfers and future staffing, arrangements for flower planting and hanging baskets be deferred for the time being but included in the long-term forward plan.

(b) That a Street Environment Working Party comprising Councillors Barker, Spence and Weaver be appointed to consider all of the other proposed initiatives in further detail and report back with recommended and costed proposals.

(c) That NWLDC be consulted regarding the possibility of inviting sponsorship for litter bins and specifications for memorial benches.

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320. VOLUNTEERING

Following publication of the Final Report by the RCC in October, a total of 53 potential volunteers had been identified. A number of these had been invited to a further Volunteer Evening for 28 November which was intended to concentrate on forming an Environmental Group, though unfortunately only one person had turned up on the night.

All potential volunteers had been contacted and either invited to the meeting or signposted towards other volunteering opportunities (for example, County Youth Service, Scouts, NWL Youth Council).

Two additional litter pickers had been recruited as a result of the invitations and a potential footpath warden had also shown interest.

Resolved: That the report be received

321. MINUTES

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 October 2013 as previously circulated be approved as a correct record

322. COMMUNITY POLICING

PC Broomfield had sent apologies that due to shift patterns neither he nor the local PCSOs were available to attend the meeting.

323. PLANNING MATTERS

(a) Applications

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

13/00755/OUT – erection of one dwelling (outline with all matters reserved) – 18 Valley Way, Whitwick

13/00785/FUL – Installation of new roof to front dormer windows and front pitched canopy to existing ground floor windows – 7 McCarthy Close, Whitwick

13/00929/FUL – Erection of single storey extension and porch to front – 1 Green Lane, Whitwick

13/00931/FUL – Erection of first floor rear extension – 7 Green Lane. Whitwick

Resolved: That no objections be made to the above applications

(b) Decisions

NWLDC had now permitted the following applications:

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13/00790/FUL – Garage conversion and single storey side/front extension – 14 Dumps Road, Whitwick

13/00800/TPO – Felling of one silver birch tree protected by TPO – 25 Silver Street, Whitwick

The following application had been **refused**:

12/01094/FUL – Erection of 4 no 2 storey (with habitable accommodation in roof space) dwellings and associated garaging (revised scheme) – 191 Loughborough Road, Whitwick

Resolved: That the report be received

(c) Leicestershire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Consultation

The Clerk reported that Leicestershire County Council had commenced a review of the current planning policies dealing with mineral extraction and waste management in Leicestershire, which were adopted in 2009. As the first stage in this review, a consultation document had been prepared which identified a range of key issues that were likely to influence the future strategy for minerals and waste planning in the County. A copy of the summary document had previously been circulated and is attached to the official copy of the minutes. The full consultation document was available to view online at www.leics.gov.uk/minerals_and_waste_local_plan. The closing date for comments was 24th January 2014.

Resolved: That no comments be submitted

324. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Councillor Spence reported as follows:

Brooks Lane - Following an accident several months ago, Police had conducted covert speed monitoring between 18 September and 25 September and 2112 vehicle movements were recorded. The speed limit was 30mph, the monitored mean recorded speed was 26.2mph, 28.3% of vehicles were above the speed limit with 5.2% being above 35mph. The Police had therefore concluded that no further action was needed in terms of speed restriction or enforcement, although they had confirmed that they would undertake advisory work in the near future. Despite this, he was hopeful that local residents would make their concerns known by way of petition to the Highways Forum.

Primary Schools – Inconsiderate parking at the start and end of the school day continued to be an issue at primary schools in the Parish. In the previous month a number of parents had expressed their concern to him about parking at Whitwick St John the Baptist. There were also issues at New Swannington. He was happy to meet with parents, residents and school leaders to try to address any issues further though, as with any other highways concerns, changes could only be made if they

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were fully consulted upon and suggested ways of solving problems were evidence-based.

Whitwick Market Place Pedestrian Crossing – he had contacted highway engineers and others, most notably Councillor Gillard to whom he conveyed his thanks for his help with this issue, about progress on the long awaited pedestrian crossing at the Market Place. This was effectively all ready to be implemented but was awaiting developer contributions from the new Co-op store which would only be paid when construction was underway.

Cycle Paths - Work was nearly completed on improvements to the cycle/footpath between Meadow Lane and St Bernard's Road. This would be of great benefit to children walking to and from school by moving them away from the busy and dangerous Leicester Road. The proposed cycle path from Stephenson Way to Hall Lane appeared to be slightly delayed due to resident/ member concerns about the routing of the path through the Sharpley Recreation Ground but he was hoping that this would progress soon. There was no further update regarding proposed cycling improvements between Stephenson Way and Green Lane.

Community Groups - Some had been in contact with him regarding difficulties they had experienced regarding payment of invoices to Leicestershire County Council. Any community group or business having difficulty with securing payments was invited to let him know.

Webcasting of Meetings - Residents should be aware that all Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee meetings at County Hall were now webcast live and a calendar of meetings could be accessed at: <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView>.

Flooding – he had invited officers from County Hall to visit Whitwick to consider local flooding problems

Damage to wall, Skinners Lane – he had been promised that this would be surveyed and was waiting to hear when the remedial works were programmed.

Storm damage – a tree had been blown down on highway land on City of Dan between its junction with Hall Lane and Silver Street. It was not in a dangerous position and would be attended to in due course.

Resolved:

(a) That the report be received

(b) That both the Parish Council and Councillor Spence make further representations for a Whitwick sign to be erected on the Parish boundary on Hall Lane

325. DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

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The Chairman reported that a revised scheme for lighting the driveway to Whitwick Park had been prepared. This would be from mains supply as it was thought that the previously proposed solar powered scheme would not get sufficient light to be reliable. It would include a light on the Youth Club building.

The latest information from the Co-op was that the demolition tendering process had been completed and they would be programming the removal of the existing buildings as soon as possible. They would also look to tender for the construction of the food store shell. The target date for the new store was currently September 2014 though they would need to allow up to 4 months slippage for weather and ground conditions, so opening could be as late as January 2015.

It was understood that a buyer had been found for the former public conveniences which were to be converted into a garage.

Resolved: That the report be received

326. “BARRIER BUSTING” – SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT 2007

Stephen Williams, MP (a new DCLG Minister) had sent a letter to all parishes encouraging them to make direct proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act, 2007 to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Their “barrier busting” application form stated “If you are trying to do something in your community, but bureaucratic barriers are holding you back, then let us know so we can try to remove them.”

The Clerk reminded members of the issue the Parish Council faced with the Clarke Close play area having been mistakenly adopted as highway and the County Council’s refusal to apply to the courts for extinguishment of those rights on grounds of cost and setting a precedent.

Resolved: That this problem be submitted for “barrier busting” with a view to a simpler procedure being introduced to allow Highways Authorities to extinguish highways rights by resolution where all tiers of local government are in agreement.

327. LAND TRANSFER FROM NWLDC

The Clerk reported that the transfer documents had been received from the Parish Council’s Solicitor on Friday, 29 November and had been signed and returned the following day. A completion date of 16 December had subsequently been agreed with NWLDC.

This parcel of transfers covered all 19 properties in the ownership of NWLDC with the exception of the recently agreed former railway station premises (to be transferred on completion of outstanding repairs to the fabric of the building) and still left several parcels to be conveyed direct from developers (including an additional

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one which had come to light at Robinson Road which would come with a commuted sum) and the transfer of the Thornborough Road allotments lease to be completed.

The Council's insurers had been contacted and had raised an array of issues which would need to be addressed over the coming week. One was with regard to rebuild costs for buildings situated within the Park. The insurers also required values for any item to be insured 'all risks', such as playground equipment.

NWLDC's Jason Knight would be attending the January meeting to present a report on the grounds maintenance estimates for the next financial year.

Resolved:

(a) That the report be received

(b) That the Clerk be authorised to obtain any necessary valuations for insurance purposes

328. FUTURE LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY

(a) NWLDC

The Clerk and Assistant Clerk had met with John Richardson, Head of Community Services, and Wendy May, Community Focus Team Leader, on 21 November. The NWLDC representatives had indicated that this would be part of an on-going conversation with parishes as austerity measures continued to bite.

The items identified for current consideration were:

(i) NWLDC to dispose of assets held in parishes – to a large extent this was already happening in Whitwick with the land transfers.

(ii) Street furniture – NWLDC would no longer be able to repair or replace or make new provision for public seats, shelters, notice boards etc so parishes would have the option of whether to take over such provision or lose the facilities.

(iii) Car parking – was the parish council interested in taking over this service? This would involve not only maintenance but also any enforcement issues.

(iv) Litter bin provision/emptying – parish councils would need to make provision for any new bins and pay for their emptying. The position regarding the cost of emptying existing bins remained under review.

(v) Planning and licensing were other services mentioned for possible future review.

Resolved: That the report be received

(b) Leicestershire County Council

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The Chairman, Clerk and Assistant Clerk had attended a meeting arranged by the LRALC at Anstey on 27 November.

County Council representatives gave a detailed presentation on their financial position – their budget would be approx. halved over 8 years – and responses to their consultations. Local services including grass cutting, street lighting and grants looked to be particularly vulnerable to further substantial cuts while gritting, services for older people and those with physical or mental disabilities were most likely to be cut the least in the light of these results.

The LRALC gave a presentation on powers available to parish councils to deliver services headlined by the general power of competence. There were various models for increased service delivery including joint working between parishes, buying-in services and grant funding other bodies to make provision.

The meeting concluded that the cuts would have a major impact on local services, that parishes had a role to play in mitigating this – but only if so they chose - and that they would require training and support to do so.

The LRALC would now continue a dialogue with the County Council to see how this could be taken forward.

Resolved: That the report be received

329. BUDGET 2014/15

The Clerk reported that it had not been possible to prepare a draft 2014/15 Budget to bring to this meeting given the uncertainty as to whether the land transfer would complete in time for setting the precept at the January meeting.

At NWLDC's Parish Liaison Meeting held on 30 October, NWLDC indicated that they would pass on the Council Tax Support Grant to parishes in the next financial year although formal confirmation of this was awaited. Principal councils did not have to pass on this grant. If they chose not to, parish councils would have to either reduce their spending or increase council tax levels to support their budgets.

Members' attention was drawn to NALC's Chairman's concern regarding "the continuing and very serious problem with Council Tax Benefit Support Grant" and LRALC's concern regarding the possible future capping of parish precepts.

Details of the Council Tax Base were also still awaited from NWLDC.

Resolved: That the report be received

330. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CONSULTATION

Leicestershire County Council was consulting on amendments to its school admissions policy for entry September 2015. The consultation ran until 27 January

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and was available online at:

http://www.leics.gov.uk/admissions_consultation_for_entry_september_2015.htm

Our two LEA schools had been invited to submit any comments or concerns but no responses had been received.

Resolved: That no comments be submitted

331. REQUESTS FOR GRANT

(a) Royal Leicestershire Regiment Memorial Appeal

Consideration was given to a request for financial assistance from the President (copy previously circulated and attached to the official copy of the minutes).

Members felt that funds would be better spent locally on refurbishing the Whitwick War Memorial.

Resolved:

(a) That no grant be made

(b) That quotations be obtained for cleaning the Whitwick War Memorial

(b) Friends of Holly Hayes Wood

An application had been received for a grant of £250 to be used to hire a flail mower and driver at £25 per hour for an estimated 2 days. A local farmer was required to cut grass in a meadow that was a Site of Special Scientific Interest and therefore needed to be cut in the correct manner under the guidance of Natural England. The Friends had entered into a Higher Level Stewardship Agreement with Natural England in December 2012 in order to maintain this SSSI which they pointed out was a valuable site with rich habitat, flora and fauna and it was therefore important that it was properly managed for the future. While recognising the valuable work carried out by this group, it was felt that there were other local groups who might have more challenging financial constraints who would benefit from the community grant scheme.

Resolved: That no grant be made on this occasion having regard to the substantial bank balance already held by the applicants.

332. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Members were asked to approve the following payments:

NWLDC – printing charges – agenda etc - £68.13

NWLDC – printing charges – community questionnaires - £31.38

Whitwick Community Enterprise – Close Knit Issue 6 - £200.00

Nicholas Hancox Solicitors – legal fees and disbursements - £1863.80

Nicholas Hancox Solicitors – legal fees and disbursements - £831.60

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Royal British Legion – Poppy wreath - £17.00 (Section 137 expenditure)
 Leics Rural Community Council – survey fees final invoice - £28.70
 Leics County Council – web support service 2013/14 - £390.00
 HMRC – tax and NI payment, Q3 - £358.20
 Amazon plc –printer ink and stationery - £36.32
 Vodafone – mobile phone top-up - £30.00
 McAfee – anti-virus renewal, one year subscription - £34.99
 AuthSMTP – Annual renewal of email account for Outlook - £30.00
 Hewlett Packard – HP Photosmart 7520 Printer - £119.01 (Asset ID EQ2)

Resolved: That these payments be approved

333. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved: That having regard to the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted, the press and public be excluded from the meeting in accordance with Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as amended)

334. STAFFING

Consideration was given to the report of the Clerk and Assistant Clerk Clerk (copy previously circulated and attached to the official copy of the minutes). (The Clerk and Assistant Clerk left the meeting during discussion of this item.)

Resolved:

(a) That to enable the Council to adopt the General Power of Competence, the Clerk and Assistant Clerk switch roles with effect from 1 January 2014

(b) That having regard to the increased workload generated by the land transfers, the original contracted hours be reinstated from 1 January 2014 to 25 hours pro rata

(c) That these arrangements be extended for a further fixed period to 30 September to enable issues arising from the land transfers to be completed

(d) That the Recruitment Working Party comprising Councillors Barker, Weaver and Woodward be reconvened to commence assessment of the Council's future staffing requirements and the recruitment process

Councillor T Gillard left the meeting at 7.45pm on completion of debate on Minute No 319 (Community Initiatives)

Councillor L Spence left the meeting at 8.40pm on conclusion of debate on Min No 331 (Requests for Grant)

The meeting terminated at 9.00pm

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