

The Annual Parish Assembly of the North Weald Bassett Parish Council, was held on Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018, in the Parish Hall, Weald Hall Lane, Thornwood Common at 7.00pm.

## ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MINUTES

**Parish Council Members Present:** Councillor Alan Buckley – Chairman  
Councillor Brian Eldridge – Vice Chairman

**Councillors:** G Mulliner, R Spearman, Mrs S Jackman MBE, T Blanks, B Clegg, A Tyler

**District Councillors Present:** Mrs A Grigg\*, D Stallan\*, R Morgan, Miss H Whitbread

\*Also Parish Councillors

**Essex County Councillor Present:** C Whitbread\*, A Jackson

\*Also District Councillor and Leader of Epping Forest District Council

**Public:** Fifty Eight Members of the Public present

**Press:** One

**Police:** Two

**In Attendance:** Susan De Luca – Clerk to the Council  
Joanna Tyler – Senior Administrative Officer

**Apologies:** Cllr B Bartram

The Chairman welcomed Members of the Public to the Annual Parish Assembly.

### **1. Introduction of Councillors**

The Chairman introduced all Parish, District and County Councillors who were in attendance.

### **2. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017 were circulated. All those present **AGREED** that the minutes be approved as a true record.

*\*Councillor Eldridge arrived.*

### **3. To consider any matters arising from the last meeting.**

No matters were raised.

### **4. To receive a report on the Council's activities from:**

**The Chairman of the Council: Councillor Alan Buckley**

The Chairman drew attendees attention to the Annual Report for 2017/2018, commending the Clerk and her team on the production and presentation. The Chairman commented that the Parish Council had received, in September 2017, the very sad news that the Parish Council's well loved and long serving chairman, Cyril Hawkins had passed away. He stated that many tributes had since been paid to Cyril and mentioned that at the end of the assembly, there would be a very fitting tribute.

The Chairman briefly summarised some of the activities and key issues which the Parish Council had been involved with during the past year:-

Planning – the Committee meet every two weeks to review Planning Applications for the Parish, of which over 100 have been received in the past year.

Bulb Planting – undertaken in Hastingwood and Thornwood. The Chairman thanked Councillors and residents for their assistance with the planting.

Village Halls – continue to thrive and provide a wide variety of activities, which are open to all. The Chairman thanked members of all the local village hall committees for looking after the halls and organising events.

Play Areas – the Parish Council regularly inspects and organises maintenance, as required. The Chairman mentioned the recent vandalism of a piece of equipment intended for use by disabled children at Weald Common play area. He stated that the Parish Council budget for this type of incident, adding that a replacement had been sourced and would be installed in the very near future.

Cemetery – opening of the new section, Meadow Brook, took place in January 2018.

Allotments – continue to see a lot of activity. The Chairman stated that there was now a waiting list for Thornwood, however, there were a limited number of plots available at other sites and urged anyone who was interested to speak to a member of the council.

Local Plan – the Chairman drew attention to the statement contained within the Annual Report.

The Neighbourhood Plan – the Chairman stated that this works alongside the Local Plan and is being managed by a Steering Group of local residents, together with three Parish Councillors. The Chairman thanked the Steering Group for the amount of work that they had put in so far, adding that this would be mentioned in further detail later in the evening.

Defibrillators – the Chairman stated that a defibrillator had been installed on the outside wall of the Parish Hall and thanked the Thornwood Seniors for their efforts in raising funds to contribute towards the purchase of this vital piece of equipment. The Chairman mentioned that a further defibrillator was to be purchased and installed in North Weald, thanking the North Weald Healing Centre ‘New Beginnings’, who had raised the necessary funds which they have donated to the Parish Council.

Finance – the Chairman reported that despite trying to keep the cost of the Precept to an absolute minimum, it had been necessary for the Parish Council to make a small increase in this year’s budget, adding that, unfortunately, the funding received from Epping Forest District Council reduces year on year.

Remembrance Day – the Chairman reported that the numbers attending the event at The Debt of Honour continues to grow year on year, mentioning the work that goes into the organisation for the day.

The Chairman thanked his fellow councillors, the Clerk, the Parish Office staff and the Parish Council’s volunteer, Mr De Luca, for all their support and efforts throughout the year.

*\*Councillors Mrs Grigg and Stallan arrived at 7.15pm*

The Chairman announced that the Parish Council had just learnt that it been awarded a Council Spotlight Award by the National Association of Local Council’s. The Chairman read out the reason for the award and praised the Parish Office staff for this well deserved recognition.

## 5. To receive a report from District Councillors

**Councillor Mr Richard Morgan, representing Hastingwood, Matching and Sheering** stated that Hastingwood is a smaller part of his ward which he enjoys looking after. He mentioned the bulb planting carried out by the Parish Council and said that he was looking forward to seeing them flower. Cllr Morgan reported that the Hastingwood Village Hall Committee have done an excellent job in the refurbishment of the village hall. Cllr Morgan thanked the Parish Council for all of the work carried out not only in Hastingwood but throughout the parish.

**Councillor Chris Whitbread, representing Thornwood Common, not only as a District Councillor, but also as an Essex County Councillor**, stated that he very much appreciated what the Parish Council do, stating that it plays an important part in keeping communities together. Cllr Whitbread reported that the District Council had been struggling through the problems of preparing a Local Plan, which is now delayed until just after 24<sup>th</sup> May, when they hope to submit it. The District Council have had to do a lot of work very quickly this year to prevent further development from being forced upon the district. One of the key concerns at District Council has been anti social behaviour, not only in the larger towns but also in the villages, therefore action has been taken to employ three police officers to assist the local police force to ensure better coverage for Epping Forest. Cllr Whitbread mentioned that Paul Pledger had been overseeing the first council house building to have been undertaken by the district for 30 years. He reported that they have just handed over four new homes in Bluemans, North Weald. Cllr Whitbread stated that the homes are of a very good quality and are for local people. The District Council's allocation policy has a seven and a half year rule, which means that people have to live in the district for a number of years before applying.

Councillor Whitbread informed those present that he had been a County Councillor since May 2017, and is the Deputy Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care. He stated that the biggest issues reported to him are highways, roads, parking, general traffic issues, all of which are of prime concern to most residents. Cllr Whitbread stated that he had reported more issues to Highways and the Local Highways Panel over the past year than ever before, adding that county have a long list of items reported against his name. He stated that it takes a long time for matters to be worked through and that you never get anything done overnight, however, assured those present that County Councillors are passing things through the highways panel and are trying their best to get things done not only for Thornwood but for the whole parish of North Weald. Cllr Whitbread stated that they are working exceedingly hard to get things achieved for local people.

**Councillor Mrs Grigg, representing North Weald Village Ward**, apologised for lateness. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that she would like to mention the two most contentious planning applications that had been received at District Council for North Weald, which were for the takeaway and the cafe. Cllr Mrs Grigg reported that the applications resulted in quite a number of people attending the District Council Planning Committee meeting. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that, fortunately, they were able to persuade their colleagues on the committee to support them in voting against it. She added that the first time they thought that they had a very good case, however was not so sure with regard to the second one, but was very pleased that the committee supported them and refused the planning application. Cllr Mrs Grigg referred to Cllr Whitbread's report regarding Highways issues and stated that whenever she sees something she reports it and is really pleased to see that the A414 just before Talbot roundabout has had its potholes filled. She added that there had been a bit of improvement in highways works around the area which she was very pleased about.

**Councillor Stallan, representing North Weald Village Ward**, reported that this year, in addition to the normal work that District Councillors do, he had the honour of being the Chairman of Epping Forest District Council which meant attending a lot of Civic Events around the district. Cllr Stallan informed those present that he had chosen two organisations to support for North Weald. Firstly the Norway House Garden Project, working with staff and residents, a piece of derelict land was turned into a garden, they now grow vegetables and have a water feature. The second organisation is Epping and North Weald Air Training corps. Cllr Stallan reported a number of children from North Weald

were involved with this and he thought that it was a worthy organisation to support. Cllr Stallan informed those present that would not be seeking re-election in May. He stated that he had represented North Weald Village for 16 years and had been a North Weald Parish Councillor for an additional 3 years. Cllr Stallan stated that it had been a privilege to serve North Weald and to work with Cllr Mrs Grigg as a fellow District Councillor for North Weald, adding that he wanted to say thank you for the support received over the last 19 years.

**Councillor Miss Whitbread, representing Thornwood Common and Epping Lindsay Ward,** stated that she wished to congratulate the Parish Council on all of its hard work and for the work on the Neighbourhood Plan.

**6. To receive a report from County Councillors**

**Councillor Mr Anthony Jackson, representing North Weald** apologised for the very long report that had been given to those in attendance. He advised that he had asked Leader of the County Council to provide him with a report about this coming year for residents to read.

**7. To receive questions from the public concerning matters over which the Parish Council has control or some influence.**

A member of the public stated that he wished to ask a question about road safety, in particular with regard to Thornwood and the B1393 on the corner of Rye Hill Road and the High Road, continuing through the village. The resident stated that people could not cross the road to get on a bus, there had been no street lighting for months. He stated that he appreciated that things were slow, however wanted to know where things were with regard to improving road safety. The second question was with regard to the Local Plan and the resident stated that as the population of Thornwood increases and more people are encouraged to live and work here, are the plans going to be reconsidered, adding that more people will increase the risk with regard to road safety.

The Clerk stated that, with regard to street lighting, the Parish Office had reported the matter to Essex County Council Highways and had called for updates as to when repairs would be carried out on a monthly basis. The Clerk informed residents that Cllr Spearman had first alerted the Clerk to the problem over a year ago. Cllr Spearman confirmed that it was the long length of street lights running from Thornwood, towards the direction of St Margaret's Hospital that he had reported and the Clerk confirmed that the long length of lights running towards the direction of the Hastingwood roundabout had also been reported. The Clerk stated that the Parish Council fully supported the residents in what they were saying and would continue to support them. The Clerk asked Cllr Whitbread if he wished to speak about the matter. Cllr Whitbread informed residents that he was fully aware of the problem and that it had originally come to his attention through District Council and he had taken the matter up with Essex County Council Highways at that time. He stated that he had also been chasing the matter through the Local Highways Panel and informed those present that there had been four speed surveys undertaken across the Thornwood area as a whole. Cllr Whitbread stated that he fully recognises the issues around the area and hoped that the results would be back very shortly, adding that as soon as they have the results, they would be reported to the Local Highways Panel. Cllr Whitbread stated that he wished to reiterate what he had said earlier in the evening that it is frustrating and slow when dealing with highways issues. With regard to the street lighting, Cllr Whitbread stated that he would take the matter up with the relevant cabinet member at County as well, adding that it was a major road and the street lighting should be there.

A second resident stated that she lives just outside of the village (Thornwood) and that the speed of the traffic is unbelievable. She mentioned that there had been a number of accidents, some resulting in fatalities, over the years. The resident stated that the road had a 50mph speed limit and that it needed to be reduced to that of Thornwood Village. The Clerk urged the resident to visit her at the Parish Office, in order that a report could be put together to send through to the Local Highways Panel. The Clerk stated that there had been some success with this in the past, mentioning the recently installed railings in North Weald High Road, by the crossing.

The resident mentioned the increase in council tax and stated that she wondered what she was paying for, bearing in mind the pot holes and lack of police. The Clerk stated that she was sure that many residents thought the same, adding that it was the same in the area that she lives in. The Chairman asked the resident to visit the Parish Office to report the issues to the Clerk.

Cllr Stallan informed those present that the speed limit through the forest was raised at a District Council Overview and Scrutiny Meeting, which was attended by the Epping Forest Conservators. He advised that they had already changed the speed limit through the forest at the other side of Epping and that they were looking at changing the speed limit through the Lower Forest and suggested that the Clerk may wish to speak with them regarding this. A resident stated that there needed to be more warning signs for deer. Cllr Whitbread stated that he had spoken to the conservators about the speed limit and the deer signs, adding that, unfortunately, the Lower Forest had been missed out, however, the District Council are speaking to them about it.

A resident asked about the anti skid surface which used to be on the road in question, asking whether or not there was a precedent to replace it as it had been laid there previously. The Clerk stated that she was not a member of County, adding that perhaps Cllr Jackson would know. Cllr Jackson stated that he did not know, however, he said that he was aware of the speed surveys that had been carried out. Cllr Jackson informed those present that when a particular issue arises in a particular county councillor's division or constituency, the Clerk contacts the councillor concerned and lets them know. The Chairman suggested that the resident visit the Parish Office to see the Clerk.

#### **8. Presentation from Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

Councillor Tyler introduced himself as one of the Parish Councillors assigned to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. He stated that the group is made up of only 6 people who volunteer out of some 6,000 residents that live in the parish. Cllr Tyler stated that the group is trying to represent the views of the people of the whole parish with regards to housing development, adding that they needed residents support. Cllr Tyler informed those present that the group was neither pro development or anti development, they wanted the right development for the parish. He stated that developments need to best suit the requirements of the people living there. Whether that be health care requirements, education, sheltered accommodation for the elderly or affordable housing. Cllr Tyler stated that these things need to be considered and need to be considered quickly.

Councillor Tyler stated that as a parish made of North Weald Bassett, Thornwood and Hastingwood, it could see an allocation of new homes to be built ranging from 1,000 to 3,000. He added that the truth was that nobody actually knows what the final number could be. He also stated that the truth was nobody knew exactly where the new housing would go, with regards to locations. He stated that we (the parish) are not alone in this, if you read any paper or watch any news bulletin, house building is on the agenda for everyone. Every parish, every town and every city are involved in the development plans to find out where new houses can be built to overcome the housing crisis which has now blighted generations.

Councillor Tyler informed those present that members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group were currently formulating a questionnaire and he urged all of those present to take 5 minutes to complete it. He stated that it would also be put on the website, details of which could be found inside the 'goody bag' placed on everyone's seat. Cllr Tyler stated that, collectively, we are stronger in numbers and although views and attitudes may be different, collectively we can get what is best for the parish. He stated that this is the time to stand up and make a difference, or look the other way and hope you are happy with it.

*Councillor Tyler introduced June Peachey, a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.*

Mrs Peachey stated that she was a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. She informed those present that although there were not many members, they were lucky to have representatives from North Weald, Thornwood and Hastingwood. She stated that Cllr Tyler had

previously mentioned the questionnaire, adding that it would be ready in the next few months. Mrs Peachey advised that the committee would be trying to make the questionnaire as simple as they could, adding that there would be both hard and electronic copies available and that help will be available to complete if required. Mrs Peachey stated that the Neighbourhood Plan is for everybody that lives in the villages, adding that it was important that everyone takes part. Mrs Peachey stated that a Neighbourhood Plan can influence the design of developments, but it cannot say where they are going, that would be in the Local Plan. Mrs Peachey informed those present that the group can try and work to protect the local green spaces, the heritage and the character of the parish and support the infrastructure needs for local residents. Mrs Peachey reiterated that the crucial thing for those present to watch out for was the questionnaire. Mrs Peachey mentioned that the 'goody bag' contained a picture of the Neighbourhood Plan logo and details of the website. She stated that if anyone present had any questions or would like to get involved, to contact the group via the website or the Parish Council. Mrs Peachey stated that the group would welcome as much support as possible, reiterating that it is our (the residents) Neighbourhood Plan.

## **9. Presentation of Citizen of the Year Awards:**

Award winners were announced by the Vice Chairman, Cllr Brian Eldridge, as follows:-

### **“Above and Beyond the Call of Duty” Award**

Awarded to Mr Paul Keens, the street cleaning operative for North Weald village. Mr Keens always ensures that the HighRoad throughout North Weald is kept exceptionally clean and tidy. He is always pleasant and friendly regardless of the weather conditions.

### **“Good Neighbour” Award**

Awarded to Mr Kenneth King. Mr King's neighbours nominated him for the award, having stated that he takes a keen interest in the surroundings, for example putting back fences which had fallen down on neighbours properties following stormy weather. Keeping an eye on neighbouring properties when owners are away, helping to keep the area safe, clearing footpaths, cutting grass, amongst many other things.

### **“Voluntary Work” Award**

Awarded to Mrs Kate Collin for voluntary work carried out at The Box in Epping, St John's Church, offering assistance to young people requiring counselling and providing help to those escaping abusive relationships. Mrs Collin has volunteered her services to North Weald Village Hall on a number of occasions. Mrs Collin is a retired Police Officer and has lived in North Weald for over 30 years.

### **“Lifetime Contribution” Award**

Awarded to Mr Derek Tringham for his many years of involvement with the Parish. Derek is President of the North Weald Branch of the Royal British Legion. He has been involved with and supported numerous groups within the community over the years. Every year Derek makes a special appearance as 'Father Christmas' at the Norway House Christmas Party.

### **Group Award**

Awarded to North Weald Healing Centre – New Beginnings, who are a non profit making group based in North Weald Village Hall. The group has been busy raising funds from those attending the Healing Centre to purchase a defibrillator for the village of North Weald. The group offers a 'Befriend Service' and meet once a week at North Weald Village Hall and is open to everyone.

### **Young Citizen of the Year Award**

Awarded to Mitchell Tassie. Mitchell is Head Cadet for the Epping Volunteer Police Cadets. He gives back to the community through conservation work and supporting local projects.

The Chairman announced a special thank you to Mrs Margaret Mulliner, for assisting with the Parish Council's Remembrance Sunday events.

#### **10. Naming of the Main Function Room – The Cyril Hawkins Room**

The Chairman informed those present that both the Parish Council and the Parish Hall Management Committee had thought that it would be a very fitting tribute to Cyril to name the main function room in memory of him. The Chairman asked Mrs Shirley Hawkins to unveil the plaque. Mrs Hawkins stated that Cyril would have been thrilled to bits.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited those present to join him to enjoy some refreshments.

**The meeting was closed at 8.00pm**