



MINUTES

Meeting: COUNCIL

Date: 3rd December 2018

Time: 7.58PM

Venue: North Weald Library, North Weald

PRESENT:

Councillors (8) A Buckley (Chairman), A Tyler, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs S Jackman MBE, B Eldridge, B Clegg, D Stallan, R Spearman.

Officers in Attendance (2)

Adriana Jones - Meeting Clerk

Jo Tyler - Senior Administrative Officer

Members of the Public (3)

Members of the Press (1)

C18.135 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (4)

Apologies from Cllrs Mrs Godwin-Brown, Bedford, Mulliner and Blanks.

C18.136 OTHER ABSENCES (2)

Cllr Bartram and Stroud.

C18.137 MINUTES

Cllr Mrs Jackman advised that the actual figure for the works to the two roundabouts in Ongar, as reference at the bottom of page 4 of the minutes, is £4million. Cllr Stallan asked if the Parish Council had actually written to Quinn Estates concerning the public statement they made at their meeting in September, during which it was stated by a representative of theirs that some of the housing from their development would be Parish Council housing. The meeting Clerk advised that whilst this issue was discussed at a previous Parish Council meeting, there was not a request for the Clerk to write and obtain any clarification in writing from Quinn Estates. Councillor Stallan asked that written clarification on these statements is obtained from Quinn Estates. The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 5th November 2018 were **AGREED**.

C18.138 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

C18.139 RESIGNATION OF COUNCILLOR CROSBY

Councillors **NOTED** the resignation of Cllr Mary Crosby from her position as Councillor for the Thornwood Ward. This leaves a vacancy for position of Councillor in this Ward. Notices of Vacancy have been erected.

C18.140 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed the three members of the public present. A representative of the North Weald Bassett and District Rural Preservation Society addressed the Council advising that the Society had written to Essex County Council on 19th November concerning the proposed closure of North Weald Library. The representative read out the content of the letter, and advised that the library should be

kept open for the good of the village itself. The representative suggested that a petition could be arranged, and that the best place for people to come and sign this petition would be at the Library itself. Unfortunately, members of the Preservation Society were unable to take on this task themselves. The meeting Clerk advised that the Preservation Society representative had indeed given a copy of this response to the Parish Council.

Cllr Stallan and Cllr Clegg declared a non pecuniary interest by virtue of being a member of the Preservation Society. Cllr Grigg declared a non pecuniary interest, advising that she was both a member and Vice President of the Society, however was unclear if a declaration was needed as the Preservation Society itself was not being discussed.

The Chairman thanked the representative for their address, and advised that the Library would be open for members of the public to complete their response to the consultation. The Chairman and the Clerk had met with a representative of ECC Libraries the prior week to discuss the possibility of the Parish Council having pop up groups and materials to publicise and assist local residents with the consultation, however were advised that clarification would need to be sought as to if the Parish Council could do this on ECC property. All Councillors had now received full details of the consultation proposals. Councillors were all in agreement that as a general position the Parish Council would support the continued opening of North Weald Library for the benefit of local residents. The Chairman advised that the best thing for local residents to do was to complete the consultation online, and the more people the better. Petitions, whether they have 1 or 20 signatures, still count as only one response, so whilst this would be good, completion of the consultation itself was essential.

Cllr Stallan stated that if the Preservation Society did want to complete a petition, the one person with whom that may have some weight would be if it was sent to the elected District and County Councillors for North Weald, as they will want to represent the views of their electorate. Cllr Stallan referenced table two in the consultation document which states that it may be possible for Tier 4 libraries to be run as community libraries. The Chairman advised that if the library could move from a tier 4 to tier 3 then this would be a possibility, and that this was something that needed to be discussed as a Parish Council. The Chairman reminded those present that the Library building itself does not belong to the Parish Council, and if the library building closed, the Parish Council would be homeless.

Cllr Tyler stated that once the library service and building was gone, it's gone, and expressed concern over the need to have a suitable base for the purposes of being a burial authority. The Chairman advised that the issue of a future office for the Parish Council was also something that would need to be considered.

C18.141 CLERKS COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

The Parish Clerk had been unwell for a number of weeks, and as such was unable to provide a formal Clerks Report. Councillors **NOTED** the following:

- A number of letters copied in to the Parish Council regarding the Library Consultation had been received.

- EFDC Cabinet Meeting of 10th December includes information about a proposed accommodation strategy which involves changes to how the Civic Offices are used, including disposal of land at the rear of the site and the letting of offices. The proposal is to build accommodation at North Weald. In addition, the proposal includes talking to North Weald Bassett Parish Council.
- EFDC Cabinet agenda also has a recommendation that the Garden Town Vision and Design Guide documents for Harlow and Gilston be agreed as a material planning consideration for the preparation of Masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and other development.

C18.142 REPORTS AND MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman advised a total of £110 had been raised by Councillors for the Norway House Children's Christmas Party, taking place between 5-7pm on 19th December. All Councillors were invited to pop along. Norway House had offered their thanks for this kind donation.
- b) **Vice-Chairman's Report** – Cllr Eldridge reported there was lots of mud along Harlow Common by Mill Street as a result of the Brent House Farm development works. It is a condition of their planning permission that a wheel washer is used, however Cllr Eldridge didn't believe this was happening. In addition, lorries had churned up the grass on the verge on Harlow Common where the daffodils were planted. This has been reported to EFDC Enforcement.
- c) **District Councillors Report** – Cllr Mrs Grigg advised that she had previously spoken with the Parish Clerk concerning agenda item 8 of the EFDC Cabinet agenda for December, regarding the accommodation strategy, with a recommendation of building office accommodation on District Council owned land in North Weald for occupation by the District Council, and potentially including partner organisations. In addition, Cabinet report item 9 has a recommendation that if the Cabinet elects to choose St John Road Epping as its preferred site for a leisure centre to replace Epping Sports Centre, then the North Weald Airfield Masterplan should be amended accordingly. Cllr Grigg advised that identified within the Local Plan for North Weald was a sports centre, and this was because the St Johns Road site in Epping was not available at that time. Sport England asked EFDC to review all these and other potential sites, and St John's Road has come back as the preferred option. Cllr Grigg advised that a further amendment was required for the cabinet report which states that North Weald has an allocation of 1,100 homes, when this should be 1,050, up to 2033 to ensure that appropriate provision is made for additional community, leisure and sporting facilities at North Weald. Cllr Grigg confirmed she had received a written apology from the Acting Chief Executive concerning the error with numbers, which she passed to the meeting Clerk.
- d) **County Councillors Reports** – None
- e) **Parish Councillors Reports** - Cllr Spearman reported that the new doors had now been fitted to the Parish Hall at Thornwood, the electrics reconnected, and all that was now left to do was to connect the burglar alarm to the doors. The Chairman advised

that the order for the storage container was now in, as was the order for the crane to lift it to the rear of the hall. An installation date was to be confirmed.

f) Queens Hall Report - The meeting Clerk reported that the Parish Council had received an email from a contractor who had completed some works at the Parish Council, which contained some pictures showing the fire escapes obstructed or tied up with shoe laces. The Clerk has notified one of the Trustees concerning this, and has received an email back from the Chairman of the Queens Hall Charity. Cllr Tyler advised that he was aware the hall was extremely dirty.

g) Neighbourhood Plan

Councillors **NOTED** the three public events to feed back the data from the completed questionnaires would be held in December as follows:

- Thursday 13th December – 5.30pm to 8.30pm – Parish Hall at Thornwood
- Friday 14th December – 4.30pm to 8.30pm – Methodist Hall, North Weald
- Sunday 16th December – 12.30pm - 3pm – Hastingwood Village Hall

h) Local Plan update

Councillors **NOTED** that notification had been received from the Program Officer of the schedule for the EFDC Local Plan examination, starting 14th February running through to 23rd May, with issues for North Weald and Thornwood being heard on 15th May. The Parish Council is required to advise the Program Officer of the intention to participate by 21st December 2018.

C18.143 FINANCIAL REPORTS

a) List of Cheques & Monthly Statement of Accounts

No report was tabled due to the absence of the Parish Clerk.

b) General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) - Standing Item

No further updates at this time.

c) Internal Audit

Councillors **NOTED** the report from the Internal Audit that took place on Wednesday 28th November had been received, however had not been reviewed at this time. This would be included on the February Parish Council agenda.

C18.144 LIBRARY CONSULTATION 29 NOVEMBER 2018 TO 20 FEBRUARY 2019

Councillors **NOTED** that Essex County Council (ECC) would shortly be consulting on its proposed new strategy for the provision of library services in Essex over the next five years, from 2019/20 to 2023/24, which could result in the closure of a number of local libraries, including North Weald. The proposed strategy is a draft document published for public consultation which will run from 29 November 2018 to 20 February 2019. A copy of the consultation documents had been sent to each Councillor for review. The draft strategy places current libraries into four tiers based on evidence of need. ECC propose that the future of the existing library network will be:

- **Tier 1:** main or 'hub' libraries, at least one per district/borough, managed by Essex County Council (ECC) as part of their statutory provision of a comprehensive network.

- **Tier 2:** library services in areas where there is a need for them, managed by ECC as part of their statutory provision of a comprehensive network and delivered in partnership with the community or other partner
- **Tier 3:** locations where no library service is needed in order to have a comprehensive and efficient network, but where ECC wishes to support the provision of library services run by a community or partner organisation with ECC support.
- **Tier 4:** locations where a library service is not required as part of a comprehensive service but where ECC will consider proposals for community libraries.

North Weald Library has been categorised as a Tier 4 location, meaning its future is under threat. As can be seen in table 2 on page 26 of the Draft Strategy, Tier 4 locations are classed as *'locations with low evidence of need, and a library service in these locations is not required as part of a comprehensive service.'* In addition, it is stated in this table that a Tier 4 library is *'not required as part of a comprehensive library service although it may be possible for a community library to be run in these settlements, if a suitable proposal from a community or partner organisation is received.'*

The Chairman advised that Councillors probably needed some further time to consider the content of these documents, and that inevitably this issue would need to be discussed in further detail at a future Council meeting when at which time the Parish Council's formal response to the consultation could be agreed. However, in the meantime, the Parish Clerk and Senior Administrative Officer had spent some time going through the proposals with some points that Council may wish to consider. The Senior Administrative Officer advised that both herself and the Clerk had looked at the consultation documents and were trying to think ahead in terms of, for example, if the Parish Council should start a campaign of public awareness, and if so this should be Councillor led. Should a working group consisting of Councillors be created, and if so who should be on it. Who should the Parish Council approach to encourage the community to complete the consultation, which must be completed on line. Councillors noted that the library staff themselves are able to take requests from members of the public who do not have access to a computer for a hard copy of the consultation documents, which would be sent to the persons home address. At this stage, the Parish Staff have not been briefed at all by ECC with regard to the consultation, and were at this stage not permitted to get involved with assisting the public. Councillors needed to consider if the Parish Council (by way of Councillors) should go out and speak to the community groups or have pop up sessions in prominent places to try and spread the word. People from Ongar, Epping and Coopersale also use this library, and there is concern that members of the public are not aware of this consultation. Should social media be used to spread the word, putting up posters, using shops in the villages, notice boards, banners, radio, office open days to include evenings and weekends.

The meeting Clerk advised that the first the Parish Office knew about this was via Everything Epping Forest. Cllr Tyler asked if banners could be erected on private land to publicise this consultation, to which the meeting Clerk advised that there were strict rules about what temporary notices could be advertised and for how long. Cllr Tyler advised he would be happy to get some banners printed. Cllr Mrs Grigg

advised that the permission of the land owner would be needed for the placing of any notices. Cllr Stallan suggested the Facebook Page of North Weald Village Life would be a useful medium to use.

The meeting Clerk advised that the Parish Council effectively had two, albeit linked, issues to consider. The first is the future of the library service at North Weald, and the second was the future of the Parish Council office and the service we offer, currently housed in the library building.

Cllr Tyler enquired as to the obligation of Essex County Council to find alternative accommodation for the Parish Council or for a transition period to be agreed, to which the meeting Clerk advised of the agreement between ECC and the Parish Office, including the break clause period, and advised that ECC has no obligation to re-home the Parish Council.

The Chairman advised that during the meeting with the ECC Library Services representative he was advised that the result of the library consultation would be released in June 2019, which leaves a 4 month period of time after the end of the consultation when a decision would be made. The Chairman suggested a working group should be formed to try and address this issue and to formulate a plan of action. Cllr Stallan asked if the Parish Council had the support of ECC Cllr Jackson, to which the Chairman stated that Cllr Jackson feels there may be a possibility that the library could move to a Tier 3 library, and that the Officers had been asking Cllr Jackson to obtain some financial details as to how much it costs to run the library in North Weald for a 1 year period. Cllr Mrs Grigg asked if this would allow the Parish Council to run a community library, expressing concern that it still may not be classed as a community library. The Chairman confirmed that Tier 3 would be a community run library, not paid for by ECC. Cllr Stallan stated that Cllr Whitbread should also be written to as the County Councillor for surrounding areas, asking him for his support. The Chairman advised that the Clerk had already written to Cllr Whitbread.

Council **AGREED** that the Parish Council should set up a working group to work towards publicising the ECC consultation to ensure as many local residents were aware of it as possible. Councillors Stallan, Tyler, Eldridge and Mrs Grigg confirmed they would be happy to sit on a working group.

There was some lack of clarity concerning what constitutes a community library, with Cllr Clegg suggesting this should be investigated. The meeting Clerk said these points were currently being questioned in order to establish exactly what would be involved. Cllr Mrs Grigg suggested discussion should take place with a community run library to understand exactly how these work, for example who would be responsible for insurance, and to establish if local volunteers would be able to run it and what would be involved.

Cllr Mrs Jackman referenced the interview that ECC Cllr Barker gave regarding this consultation.

C18.145 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY EVENTS

Councillors *NOTED* that the Remembrance Sunday events were extremely successful. Thanks were recorded for the office staff and their organisation of these events. It was *NOTED* that a microphone would definitely be needed for next year.

C18.146 ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Members *NOTED* that the nomination of North Weald Library as an Asset of Community Value has been made to the District Council, and that a response has been received to confirm that the initial criteria has been met. This will now be formally considered by EFDC, who have 8 weeks to make the determination.

C18.147 ESSEX HIGHWAYS

a) Pilot Highways Devolution Scheme

On 15th November, the Clerk attended a briefing on a pilot scheme being run by Essex Highways to devolve certain powers down to Parish and Town Councils. The pilot is for a 6-12 month period, and will provide those councils interested in taking part in the pilot with a sum of money to manage specific highway responsibilities throughout the Parish. The scope of works covered include:

1. Winter Maintenance Salt Bags Scheme (Snow clearance and Salting of Footways and Paths)
2. Minor Repairs to Footways and Off-Road Cycle ways
3. Highway Verge Cutting including Special Roadside Verges
4. Weed Control
5. Tree and Hedge Maintenance
6. Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Maintenance
7. Passenger Transport Infrastructure Maintenance (Bus Stop Flags and Shelters)
8. Repair and Maintenance of Road Sign

It should be noted that the scope does not extend to any works to main roads, such as potholes.

The sum of money provided to North Weald Bassett Parish Council for a 1 year period would be £4,600. Essex Highways are unable to provide a list of exactly what areas they are responsible for in the Parish, and state that the Parish Council could prioritise what works it chooses to complete. The stated reason for the devolution pilot is that ECC feel local communities may be able to complete these works cheaper and more efficiently than ECC, and that local communities are able to prioritise the work according to the needs of residents. Following the pilot, consideration will be given by ECC to the full devolution of duties, however it is not anticipated that further funding will be provided to Parish Councils at this time. The meeting Clerk provided a summary of the meeting that herself and the Parish Clerk attended, stating that at this stage ECC was not able to provide the Parish Council with a list of what assets it owns in the Parish, where any such assets were, what their current responsibilities were, and what would be expected of the Parish Council. In light of this basic lack of clarity, the Parish Council decided it would not move forward with the devolution pilot until such time as these points could be confirmed, so that the Parish Council could be fully aware of what its responsibilities would be under this scheme.

b) Highways Briefing to EALC

On 7th November, Cllr Mrs Jackman, Cllr Blanks and the Clerk attended a Highways Briefing held at EALC which included the following points:

- Highways Strategic Planning and its link to District and Parishes
- Network and Streetworks Management
- Flooding Management in Essex
- 'Green Claims' - help the service help you
- Local Highway Panel Update

Cllr Mrs Jackman advised that nothing staggering emanated from the meeting, with many questions being asked but not too many being answered satisfactorily.

C18.148 BUDGET & PRECEPT MEETING

Members were reminded that the Budget and Precept Meeting will be held on Monday 17th December in the North Weald Library, following the Planning Meeting, and that there will also be a pre-budget and precept meeting on 13th December at 10am in the lounge at North Weald Village Hall. The purpose of the pre-budget meeting is to ensure all members have a full understanding of all the paperwork that has been produced, and will ensure that the Meeting on the 17th will be able to proceed and progress in a timely manner. Included as part of the Budget and Precept meeting will be a recommendation concerning changes to the staff salary structure following the recent profiling exercise conducted by the Council. The recommendations proposed at the Budget and Precept meeting (F&GP) will be put to full council at their January 2019 meeting for ratification

Members were reminded they need to let the Clerk have full details of any items that they wish to be placed on the List of Items to be considered for this meeting by Monday 3rd December.

C18.149 CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR CLOSURE

Members were reminded that the staff would be taking Annual Leave over the Christmas & New Year period. Therefore the Parish Council Office and the Library (on the days that the Council operates it) will close at 1.15pm on Wednesday 19th December and re-open at 9.15am on Wednesday 2nd January 2019. There will, of course, be emergency cover for the Cemetery & Funerals during this period and the Clerks Mobile Phone Number and details will be left on the Office answerphone and on a Notice on the Library Door, as well as on noticeboards.

C18.150 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Due to the agenda containing Exempt (pink) pages, the Chairman proposed a motion that the public and the press be excluded from the meeting, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed. This was **AGREED**.

C18.151 EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL - LOCAL PLAN INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION

It was **NOTED** that due to the absence of the Parish Clerk, there was no update to give at this time.

C18.152 DATA ANALYSIS, NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION

Councillors recalled that in June/July 2018, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group completed a public consultation by way of a questionnaire to residents. This data has been analysed, and will form the basis of the three public events being held in December as what was referred to under agenda item 8(g). There are a number of points in the report which require clarification, as well as a number of typographical errors which need changing, and these had been requested.

Meeting closed 20.47

Signed

Date