



**MINUTES**

**Meeting:** COUNCIL

**Date:** 2nd February 2015

**Time:** 7.45 PM

**Venue:** NORTH WEALD LIBRARY, 138 HIGH ROAD, NORTH WEALD

**PRESENT:**

**Councillors (11)** C Hawkins (Chairman), B Eldridge, B Clegg, G Mulliner, B Bartram, A Buckley, P Collins, T Blanks, D Stallan, Mrs A Grigg, R Spearman

**Also in Attendance (2)**

Susan De Luca, Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer (PFO)

**Members of the Public (1)**

**Members of the Press (1)**

**C14.157 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)**

**NOTED** that apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Mrs D Adams, N Bedford and Mrs E Godwin-Brown.

**C14.158 OTHER ABSENCES (0)**

No other absences were recorded.

**C14.159 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 2nd February 2015 were **AGREED** and signed as a true record. Councillors **NOTED** the minutes of the Parish Hall Thornwood Common Committee Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and the Parish Council Environmental Committee held on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015.

**C14.160 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs Mrs Grigg and Stallan stated they had taken advice from EFDC Monitoring Officer, and both declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 - Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Mulliner declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 10 by virtue of being a trustee of North Weald Village Hall.

**C14.161 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The Chairman welcomed the members of the public, and invited them to address the Parish Council. Cllr Mrs Sheila Jackman, Vice Chairman of the EALC, reminded members present of the police conference taking place on 25th March 2015, costing £20 which included lunch. Members were asked to contact the Clerk if they wanted to attend.

**C14.162 CLERKS UPDATE AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

The Clerk stated that there was no formal report this month, and that any prevalent issues were included in the agenda. There were two items of correspondence - the RCCE Oyster magazine, and the Village Life.

## C14.163 REPORTS AND MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman reported that it had been a relatively quiet month in terms of meetings outside the Council.
- b) **Vice-Chairman's Report** – The Vice Chairman reported that the issues of no paths in Hastingwood and horses grazing on open land is still prevalent. The Clerk stated that there is new legislation coming soon regarding the tethering of horses on commons, and that she would give further details if requested.
- c) **District Councillors Report** – Cllr Grigg reported that there has been interest in the possibility of a park and ride at North Weald Airfield, however the full report is not due until the end of the month. This is due to be heard in April.

Cllr Stallan stated that he had no report to give. The Clerk asked Cllr Stallan about the Council Housebuilding Committee report which detailed the possibility of houses at the rear of Queens Road, and expressed her concern about the possibility of being land locked at Queens Road Allotments. Cllr Stallan stated that at the last meeting it was agreed to progress the Bluemans End site, but that the Queens Road site was deferred until further information was available. This matter is on the 5th March Committee agenda. The further information needed was reference the widening of the access and costs regarding the substation, however Cllr Stallan had no details of the access to Queens Road Allotments. The Clerk expressed her concern as to whether or not EFDC had factored the allotment access in for consideration. The Clerk stated that if you look at the map (accepting this is only a desktop study) it doesn't indicate any access to the allotments. Cllr Stallan stated that he was the Chairman of this Committee, however in the spirit of fairness he had vacated the Chair, and would soon be a normal acting member of the committee. Cllr Stallan confirmed he would bring this issue up at the Committee meeting on Thursday

- d) **Councillors Reports** - Cllr Blanks confirmed that both himself and the PFO has started to look at the new accounts software, with training taking place on Thursday, and the plan is to go live on 1st April.

Cllr Bartram reported that an official event is being arranged for 25th March 2015 at the Queens Hall to celebrate the installation of the youth shelter, and the dedication of the memorial playing fields as a Queens Elizabeth II Fields In Trust. The event would be at 2pm, and further details would be sent out nearer the time.

Cllr Spearman reported that the official opening of the Parish Hall at Thornwood Car Park took place on 27th February with 47 people in attendance including Cllr Finch from ECC, and Cllr Boyce, Chairman of EFDC. The press were also present. Cllr Spearman asked that thanks were recorded for both Janet and Shirley who were kind enough to organise the refreshments. The Chairman stated that when this was first discussed, it was expected that a long period of

fund raising would ensue, however thanks to the grant received from the ECC Community Initiatives Fund, this has now be completed. The Chairman asked for thanks to be recorded for the Clerk's success in securing this funding.

- e) **Highways** - The PFO informed members of a new website - [www.v6.roadworks.org](http://www.v6.roadworks.org), into which you can enter details of a specific area and timescale, and it will detail all the planned road works and road closures in that area. It was **AGREED** the PFO would send this link out to members.
- f) **Environmental Issues** - Cllr Mulliner reported that there had been a complaint of rats at Hastingwood A Allotments, but that this was being dealt with by the Allotment Sub Committee. It was noted that the next Environmental Committee meeting would be Wednesday 18th March.

#### C14.164 FINANCIAL REPORTS

a) **List of Cheques & Monthly Statement of Accounts**

Members **APPROVED** the list of cheques, which were signed up to 28th February 2015 and noted the income received and the account balances.

The PFO drew members attention to the addition of the new Unity bank accounts detailed on the cheque list. In addition, she informed members that any payments made by way of the pre paid card were highlighted in red on the cheque list.

The PFO informed members that she had spoken at length with the supplier and trainer for the Financial Software (who also acts in an advisory capacity for NALC), and he had stated that the use of the Parish Hall account was superfluous and not required. Councillors **AGREED** that there was no need to continue using this account.

#### C14.165 PATHWAY TO WEALD COMMON

Members **NOTED** that documentation had finally be received from Whiskers Solicitors, a copy of which was attached to the agenda which included a colour map and a copy of the deed easement. These documents are signed by Bob Wood (Chairman at that time), Cllr Cyril Hawkins (Vice Chairman at that time) and the trustees of the village hall. The documents confirmed that the Parish Council has a right over the Village Hall land for the purposes of car parking (the Clerk read out the specific detail). The Clerk had been unable to locate any other documents. The Clerk stated that as she wasn't employed by the Parish Council at that time, she is unable to state what agreement was in place in terms of the path, however she feels the Parish Council would not have laid a path at this location without having permission to do so. Cllr Collins concurred with this statement, stating that there must have been some form of agreement, verbal or written. Cllr Collins asked how this should now be progressed, now that we know there is now hard copy document. The Clerk stated that the pathway has been in situ for 11 years, but that she was unable to made any recommendations to the Council in terms of how to deal with this issue. Cllr Collins suggested that contact should be made with the Village Hlal

chairman with a view to coming to an agreement. The Clerk stated this was a good idea, but reminded members that if it was agreed to move the location of the path, a new legal agreement would need to be drawn up (in excess of £1,500). Cllr Collins stated that the other agreement was probably a gentleman's agreement, and asked if there was anything stopping the Parish Council from having another gentleman's agreement but documented detailing the more acceptable route. The Clerk stated that a gentleman's agreement was not an acceptable agreement.

#### **C14.149 PATHWAY TO WEALD COMMON**

Members *NOTED* the report which was attached to the agenda which detailed the complex issue of ownership of land and that the Clerk was awaiting a details from Whiskers Solicitors in terms of the documents which may detail any rights or easements over this land.

The Chairman gave members a brief history of the Path at Weald Common, stating that until confirmation regarding the documentation is received from Whiskers, there is no point having a detailed discussion. The Chairman also stated that when the time comes to look at this issue, a site visit should be conducted by all North Weald

Village Councillors so they have a clear understanding of the site and the relevant issues. Cllr Collins expressed his concern that this issue could result in the good rapport with the Village Hall Committee being lost, and that the way he interpreted the issue suggested this was building up to previous times of clashes and these two parties being unable to work together. He continued stating that he recalled the discussions with the previous Clerk, Mr Farr, regarding this issue and that site visits were conducted at the time. Cllr Mulliner stated that the Village Hall Committee is suggesting that the location of the current path is not appropriate, and that the Committee would prefer that the path doesn't go under the Willow Tree. The tree is fragile and constant walking underneath it in the summer is not good for its integrity. Cllr Collins stated that he understood this, however people will simply take the quickest route and asked what plans the Village Hall Committee had to fence it off. Cllr Mulliner stated that this first came to light because of the incredibly muddy access to the Weald Common play area, and that discussions had taken place to suggest the Bridleway would be the most suitable path, however the Clerk has suggested that a specific type of surface may be needed. Cllr Bartram suggested that Councillors should wait and see what any documentation may state. This will be placed on the next agenda for further discussion.

#### **C14.150 STREET LIGHTS – REPORTS URGENT MATTERS**

Councillors *NOTED* that the Parish Council are responsible for 118 street lights in the Parish. As owner, the Parish Council has a duty to ensure the street lights are structurally and mechanically safe and do not pose a H&S Risk. To this end, the meeting clerk reported that a full and thorough inspection of the Street Lights had taken place, and there are a number of resultant actions required. There is specific legislation which covers Street Lighting which is involved and complex. The Clerk

had obtained a detailed summary of the works required, and has received the following guidance:

1. *Structural - Replace the RED Columns now*
2. *Structural - Re Test the AMBER and YELLOW Columns in 2 years*
3. *Electrical - Rectify the Code 1 and 2 Defects now*

*By actioning items 1 and 3 the Parish Council will have complied with legislation and rectified potentially dangerous Structural and Electrical defects.*

Following the summary received, the Clerk instructed the Parish Councils Street Lighting contractor to review each of the structural RED issues, and report back with his findings. Taking both reports into consideration, it is suggested that the following programme of works should be considered:

**Immediate - £5,443.91**

6037 - School Green Lane - Replace - £1835  
6015 - 71 Queens Road - Replace - £1835  
6092 - Woodside - Repair - £500 (approx)  
41 Electrical code 1 & 2 defects - Repair - £1273.91

**Within 12 months - £3,670**

6002 - George Avey Croft - Replace - £1835  
6013 - 47 Queens Road - Replace - £1835  
6033a - Beamish Close - further inspection to be conducted

**Within 2 years**

Retest all the amber and yellow columns for structural integrity

Councillors had been made aware that a full copy of all the inspection results was available at the Parish Council office if members would like to peruse them.

Councillors asked if there was an agreed type of street light and column that was recommended, and asked what the alternatives were. The meeting clerk stated that this was a very specialised issue and that she had no knowledge of the options available and has simply gone on the recommendation of the Councils Street Lighting contractor. Councillors **AGREED** that the meeting clerk should contact the Councils contractor and ask why he had chosen those specific columns, and what the other alternatives were. This would allow the Council to make a more informed decision. Cllr Bedford suggested that perhaps the Council should be moving to LED lighting, and suggested that perhaps some form of Grant may be available to convert the Parish street lights to LED lighting. This would be better on an economic level.

The meeting clerk reiterated to Members that at present there were 3 street lights that required immediate structural attention and that whilst these enquiries were relevant Councillors should be mindful of the delay they may cause and the remaining H&S

risk. Cllr Bedford stated that if need be, the columns could be removed and capped whilst these investigations took place, thus eliminating the risk. It was **AGREED** that the meeting clerk would investigate funding for LED lighting, and the options available.

#### **C14.151 TREES ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND – RISK ASSESSMENT**

Councillors **NOTED** that following a conversation with Councillor Mulliner it had come to the attention of the Clerk that it may now be necessary to carry out regular inspections of trees on Parish Council owned land. Previously we have only carried out tree inspections on Allotment Land, and now that this has been brought to our attention it may be necessary to ensure that Risk Assessments are carried out at other areas. The Clerk was seeking advice as to how often the Risk Assessments need to be carried out and who they need to be carried out by. The meeting clerk tabled some information for members on this issue, including a document entitled 'THREATS - Risk Evaluation and Treatment Systems for Trees.

Cllr Clegg stated that in light of the seriousness of this issue, was the Councils Grounds Maintenance Contractor the right person for the job - do the checks need to be undertaken by somebody fully qualified to do them. This was a concern expressed by other Members. Cllr Bedford suggested that EFDC's Tree Warden should be invited to attend the next Parish Council meeting to advise Council on how to evaluate the viability of a tree, and what the Parish Councils role was as land owner. Cllr Mulliner expressed his concern that these checks seemed a little excessive. The meeting clerk stated that as land owner the Parish Council has a responsibility to ensure as best as possible that all its land is safe, especially areas in which the public are known to regularly frequent. Cllr Bartram stated that as a first point the Parish Council need to be fully aware of what land it owns, and mentioned that there is case law regarding accidents that have occurred by falling trees.

Cllr Bedford stated that a common sense approach should be taken to managing trees, and gave the meeting clerk details of a website which had a good document detailing this approach. This was a Government website. Cllr Godwin-Brown suggested that trees located near open areas in which the public roam should be conducted first, and then the more remote areas after. Cllr Collins stated that a policy would need to be devised and put in place.

It was **NOTED** that this would be placed on the next agenda for further discussion.

#### **C14.152 PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD - COMPLETION OF SURFACING TO CAR PARK**

Councillors **NOTED** that following the completion of the surfacing of the Car park at the Parish Hall at Thornwood with monies from the Parish Council, a grant from Essex County Council Community Initiative Fund and fund raising members of the Thornwood Community, a small event to celebrate this will be held on Friday 27th February 2015 at 1.45pm with a light buffet reception. Invitations have been sent out, and all Members are invited to attend.

**C14.153 ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY**

Councillors **NOTED** that due to the Purdah period, this year's Annual Parish Assembly would be held at the Parish Hall in Thornwood Common on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015 at 7.00pm.

**C14.154 ANNUAL ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE MEETING**

Councillors **NOTED** that this year's Annual Allotment Committee meeting would be held at the Parish Hall in Thornwood Common on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2015 at 10am.

**C14.155 PARISH COUNCIL CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**

Members **NOTED** that the **Parish Council** Annual Citizen of the Year Award is upon us again. Members were asked to advise the staff of any nominations on the enclosed form by Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

**C14.156 CONSULTATION - EFDC REIVEW OF THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME & TENANCY POLICY**

Councillors **NOTED** that the Parish Council had received details of a consultation documentation from the District Council in relation to the District Council's Housing allocations scheme & tenancy policy. A copy of the letter giving a short summary of the relevant documentation was attached to the agenda, and the relevant documentation was held in the office. Cllr Stallan had also provided members with a summary of the main points of the consultation, details of which were read out for Members at the meeting. Councillors **AGREED** to **SUPPORT** the proposed changes to these documents.

Cllr Mulliner requested that a draft copy of the minutes of Parish Council meetings are circulated earlier than with the next agenda. It was suggested this was trialled for a period of 2 months.

Meeting closed 20.40

Signed .....

Date .....