



**MINUTES**

**Meeting:** COUNCIL

**Date:** 6th February 2017

**Time:** 7.45PM

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

**PRESENT:**

**Councillors (12)** C Hawkins (Chairman), A Buckley, B Eldridge, G Mulliner, B Clegg, Mrs S Jackman MBE, T Blanks, B Bartram, Mrs A Grigg, D Stallan, N Bedford, A Tyler

**Officers in Attendance (2)**

Susan De Luca, Clerk  
Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

**Members of the Public (5)**

**Members of the Press (1)**

**C16.118 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)**

**NOTED** that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Mrs Godwin-Brown, and Cllr Spearman.

**C16.119 OTHER ABSENCES (0)**

None.

**C16.120 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 5th December 2016, and the Finance and General Purposes committee meeting of 16th January 2017 were **AGREED** and duly signed as a correct record. The Minutes of the Environmental Meeting held on the 18th January 2017, and the Minutes of the Parish Hall at Thornwood Common held on 5th January 2017 were **NOTED**.

**C16.121 PRECEPT 2017/2018**

Councillor Blanks explained that both he and the PFO had made a number of adjustments to the budget figures for 2017/2018 (highlighted in yellow on the report attached to the agenda). Cllr Mrs Jackman **PROPOSED** these amendments were accepted. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Bedford. A vote was taken and all present were in agreement.

Cllr Stallan requested a recorded vote was taken on the recommendation of the Finance and General Purposes Committee to increase the Precept Request by 2% to £175,475, the results of which were as follows:

**For:** Cllrs Clegg, Bedford, Bartram, Blanks, Buckley, Tyler, Eldridge, Mrs Jackman, and Hawkins

**Against:** Cllrs Mulliner, Stallan and Mrs Grigg

The Parish Council therefore **RESOLVED** to **ACCEPT** the recommendation of the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the precept request for 2017/2018 will be £175,475, representing a 2% increase on 2016/2017.

#### **C16.122 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Mulliner declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 12 by virtue of being a Trustee of the North Weald Village Hall. Cllr Stallan declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 15 - Queens Hall Garages - by virtue of being the Housing Portfolio Holder at the time of the decision being made, and that following an update from the Clerk on the content of the discussion under this item he would remove himself from the meeting for that item. Cllr Bedford declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 11.

#### **C16.123 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The Chairman welcomed the five members of the public present. Mr Winston Ramsey addressed the Parish Council, advising he was Editor in Chief of the After the Battle publication and had been caretaker of the Airfield memorial for the past 16 years. Mr Ramsey stated he had written two letters to the Clerk, dated 14th November 2016 and 3rd January 2017, and that he wished to personally ask the Clerk that in her letter dated January 18th to Mr Chipp EFDC, why she had falsely stated that she had advised him that the airfield memorial was unsafe, asking where within his letters had he stated this. Mr Ramsey stated that at no time has he advised anybody that the memorial is unsafe, and asked the Parish Council to refrain from misquoting him, and for the Clerk to retract her statement to Mr Chipp.

Cllr Stallan raised a point of order, asking if members of the public were legally able to question the Clerk about what action she takes in her position as Clerk. Members decided that as Mr Ramsey had questioned the action of the Clerk they felt that she did not need to answer his question as this was not what Questions from members of the Public was for. The Clerk agreed and advised that there were procedures that Members of the public can go through for questioning the actioning of the Clerk.

The Clerk stated that Mr Ramsey was able to ask the Council a question, and it would be up to the Council to decide if they would like the Clerk to answer, however Cllr Blanks advised that he felt enough time had been accorded on this item over the past few months, this was also agreed by Cllr Mrs S Jackman, MBE. Council stated that as this issue was a specific item on the agenda (item 11) they wanted to reserve judgement as to whether or not the Clerk should make any comments until this agenda item.

#### **C16.124 CLERKS UPDATE AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

Councillors **NOTED** the following report from the Clerk:

Date	Reported By or Action Initiated By	Regarding	Action Taken	Further Action Taken
DEC/JAN	CLERK	Admin	Ongoing/Continuing	VARIOUS ADMINISTRATION - ie Memorial
DEC/JAN	Clerk/PFO	Neighbourhood Area Plan	Ongoing	Various Actions

DEC/J AN	SENIOR ADMIN OFFICER	QUALITY COUNCIL	Ongoing	Preparation of Documentation
DEC/J AN	PFO	QUALITY COUNCIL	Ongoing	Website
DEC/J AN	PFO	BUDGET/ PRECEPT	Continuing	Preparation of Documentation
DEC/J AN	CLERK	QUALITY COUNCIL	ONGOING	Checking Documentation
DEC/J AN	CLERK	ARCHIVES	ONGOING	FIRST REGISTRATION OF LAND
ITEMS RECEIVED WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST				
Various EFDC Agendas, North Weald Village Life, EALC – Various Items, Civic Award Forms, Preservation Society Newsletter, Thornwood Common Book				

The Clerk advised Councillors that she was hoping to obtain a copy of the local history book by Jimmy Walters for all Parish Council members under the CIF as it has a detailed history of the Milestones in the Parish.

Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE asked that thanks were recorded to the Office Staff for their work and investigation over recent months.

#### C16.125 MEMBERS REPORTS

The following reports were **RECEIVED**:

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman thanked all Councillors who had attended the various events over the Christmas period, including the readings at St Andrews and the Children's party at Norway House.
- b) **Vice-Chairman's Report** – No Report
- c) **District Councillors Report** – No Report
- d) **County Councillor Report** - No Report
- e) **Councillors Reports** – Cllr Eldridge reported that he hadn't got anywhere with EFDC in terms of collecting litter from the ditches in Hastingwood, thought to be caused by excess traffic. Horses are still an issue in Hastingwood, with a number of younger horses being untethered and causing a problem for vehicles. In addition, the vehicles that arrive to feed the horses are cutting up the verges and the ditches are falling in. Cllr Grigg concurred that the untethered horses are an issue.

Cllr Bedford reported that it had been agreed this week that Junction 7a would go ahead with work due to start in 2019 and expected to last for 5 years.

#### C16.126 FINANCIAL REPORTS

- a) **List of cheques and Monthly Statement** - The cheque lists for November, December and January were tabled and agreed. Cllr Blanks stated that he had heard that dog waste can now be disposed of via the normal household waste and should this be considered as a possible saving avenue? Concern was expressed about changing to this at this time.

- b) **Internal Audit** - members **NOTED** the interim internal audit for 2016/2017 as attached to the agenda.
- c) **Fees:**
  - i) Cemetery Fees – Members **NOTED** the suggested increase of 5% in the Cemetery Fees for 2017/2018 as detailed within the Environmental Minutes.
  - ii) Allotment Fees – Members **NOTED** the suggested increase of 10% in Allotment Fees for 2018/2019 as detailed within the Environmental Minutes.All of the above rounded up to the nearest £.  
*Members noted that Parish Hall Fees are not being discussed until the meeting of the Parish Hall Committee which is to be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> February*
- d) Councillors **NOTED** the letter of apology from Epping Forest District Council regarding issue with 2015/2016 Precept figure reported to External Auditor as attached to the agenda. Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE confirmed that this was received following pressure from the Epping Forest Branch of EALC.

#### **C16.127 AMENDMENT TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA DESIGNATION FOR NORTH WEALD BASSETT**

Members noted the further letter that had been sent to Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) representing the Councils ‘**formal**’ request to amend the Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation for North Weald Bassett to include the part of Hastingwood previously excluded by EFDC, a copy of which was attached to the agenda. The Clerk provided members with an update stating she had contacted EFDC on 3rd February, and had been advised that a report had been written, and that the Designated Area would be amended to include the previously excluded area of Hastingwood. Council asked that thanks were formally recorded for the Steering Group with pushing to get this area included.

#### **C16.128 COMPLAINT FROM MR RAMSEY REGARDING THE DEBT OF HONOUR MEMORIAL**

Following the last meeting of the Parish Council and the meeting of the Environmental Committee where the Clerk was instructed to forward correspondence relating to the *inference* by Mr Ramsey that the Memorial was experiencing current structural damage, a further letter of complaint has been received, a copy of which was attached to the agenda. The Clerk has acknowledged the letter by email advising that this letter would be placed on the Parish Council Agenda. A copy of all Mr Ramsey’s documentation relating to the structure and maintenance of the memorial was included with the agenda together with the photos he provided, along with the Clerk’s letter to the Chief Executive. A response had also been received from the Deputy Chief Executive of Epping Forest District Council regarding this matter.

Cllr Blanks said that he felt this was a lot of fuss about nothing, stating that he recalls that Remembrance Sunday was not a very nice day in terms of weather, and there was green slimy material on the paving slabs by the Debt of Honour, and as there were many elderly people who were laying wreaths he felt Cllr Bedford did the right thing to try and protect them and make the area safe. Cllr Eldridge stated that writing 'beware' in salt in front of the Norwegian Stone was not defacing, but a safety procedure. Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE asked for clarification as to if it is the Trust who

own the Debt of Honour, to which it was confirmed they do. Cllr Jackman stated that the memorial is not the responsibility of the Parish Council, nor is the tree in question, and that the Parish Council should consider what would happen if there was an accident at this location caused by poor maintenance as the Parish Council cannot accept any liability for such an accident.

Cllr Stallan asked who owned the Norwegian stone, to which the Clerk confirmed her understanding was that the Parish Council who owned it. The Clerk stated that there was little information regarding the stone in the accessible files, however she believed this was bestowed to the Parish Council in 1952. Arthur Moreton, North Weald Historian, stated that the wording on the stone explained that it was presented to the people of the Epping Forest Area as a personal thank you for way the Norwegian airmen were looked after during the second world war. Mr Moreton confirmed he would be happy to help offering any historic updates of needed. The Chairman stated that this didn't actually clarify who owned the Norwegian Stone, to which Mr Moreton stated it should be EFDC, however it was noted that EFDC were not in existence in 1952.

Cllr Stallan stated that clearly there were questions regarding ownership of the stone, however what is clear is that since he joined the Parish Council the number of people attending the memorial service at this location has increased year on year, and he would not support moving the Remembrance Sunday service to another location. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that since the building of the Debt of Honour, increasingly people attend the event as there is a specific place that wreaths can be laid.

The Clerk stated that as the Parish Council organise the Service, it is a responsibility of the Parish Council to consider the health and safety of attendees at such events, and thankfully the ATC were able to provide assistance when it was needed at the 2016 event. The fact remains that the surface was slippery and was a health and safety issue, and that some type of action was needed to resolve the problem on the day. The Clerk stated that many of the attendees were elderly, and not necessarily steady under foot. The Clerk expressed her concern that this had been made into something much bigger and complicated than necessary for over three months, and that a line should be drawn in the sand and move on.

The Chairman stated that in his opinion a structural engineers report is needed to ensure the memorial is safe. Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE said that if this is completed, it shouldn't be by the Parish Council as the Debt of Honour is not their responsibility. Cllr Stallan stated that the real issue is that the Parish Council are organising an event on land that doesn't belong to them, and proposed that going forward the event should continue to held at the Norwegian stone, with wreaths laid at the stone itself rather than the debt of Honour. Cllr Stallan stated that if the Trust want to instruct a structural survey, that would be up to them, and that the only responsibility the Parish Council may have is the Norwegian stone itself.

The Chairman suggested that the issue of the letters now be closed, and that the only thing for the Parish Council to consider is how the event will be held going forward. Cllr Bedford asked if members wanted the Clerk to make a formal response, to which collectively Members agreed she should not. Cllr Blanks **PROPOSED** that no further

action is taken regarding these letters. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Stallan, who also requested a vote on this proposal, the result being as follows:

9 - For  
0 - Against  
1 - Abstain

It was **AGREED** that the clerk look into how the Norwegian Stone was given to the Parish Council if possible.

#### **C16.129 NORTH WEALD VILLAGE HALL CAR PARK**

Members recalled that at the December Parish Council Meeting a North Weald Village Hall user spoke to Members of the Parish Council under Questions from Members of the Public regarding the Village Hall car park. It was suggested during that discussion that this matter should be placed on the next Parish Council Agenda so it could be formally discussed. A copy of the documentation was attached to the agenda for member's information.

Cllr Mrs Jackman asked for clarification as to who wrote the unsigned letter, to which Cllr Mulliner stated it was the gentleman who spoke at the previous meeting. Cllr Mulliner stated there was much opposition to this from the Village Hall Committee, and that he didn't think this would progress much further at the current time, however alternative strategies regarding managing the parking and signage may be looked at.

Cllr Stallan stated that he felt this was an issue for the North Weald Village Hall Committee to deal with, and not the Parish Council. Cllr Grigg reminded members that at the previous meeting, the gentleman who spoke alluded to receiving legal support from EFDC regarding the wording of proposed signage regarding car parking at the hall, and at the time she was very critical that Weald Common was not mentioned in the notice. Cllr Mrs Grigg **PROPOSED** that the Parish Council should not get involved at this time. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE.

#### **C16.130 FIRST REGISTRATIONS OF LAND**

Members **NOTED** that further documentation had been provided to the Parish Council's Solicitors who continue to deal with this matter. After a visit to the Essex Records Office (ERO), further documentation has now been sourced, however ERO need to digitally transcribe the details. Once this has been completed the documentation will be emailed to the Parish Council and subsequently forwarded on to the Solicitors

#### **C16.131 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

##### ***a) REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS***

It is good practice for Parish Councils to review their Standing Orders on an annual basis. A copy of the latest adopted Standing Orders (adopted November 2014) was attached to the agenda. Members **RESOLVED** to approve these standing orders with no changes required.

##### ***b) REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS***

It is good practice for Parish Councils to review their Financial Regulations on an annual basis. A copy of the latest adopted Financial Regulations (Adopted September 2015) was attached to the agenda. Members **RESOLVED** to approve these Financial Regulations with no changes required.

#### **C16.132 QUEENS ROAD GARAGES & ALLOTMENTS**

Members **NOTED** that Epping Forest District Council had agreed the Parish Council's second choice name for the new Queens Road Development – "Elizabeth Close". Work is due to commence within the next couple of weeks, and letters have been sent to Allotment tenants on both the Queens Road and Wheelers Farm Gardens sites advising of this. The Clerk had a meeting with Paul Pledger from EFDC who pre-advised that there may be some works necessary to connect the water / drains for the new development to the relevant supplies which may involve going through some of the Parish Council owned land on the Wheelers Farm Gardens site. Confirmation of whether this will be necessary is expected at a later date, and the Clerk has advised that a meeting will need to be arranged to discuss this between EFDC the Contractors and the Parish Council. The Clerk also advised Paul Pledger that Allotment Holders have / or probably are currently planting up their plots, so this will also need to be taken into consideration.

The Clerk further advised that on the previous Friday she had received an email from the contractor completing the housing development works at Queens Road, together with a copy of the enabling works programme, which detailed the potential for the access to the allotments to be limited. The Clerk had phoned the contractor, who stated that this was detailed within the Tender Document sent to EFDC. Knowing this was not what was agreed, the Clerk had contacted EFDC (Paul Pledger and James Shutt) and a full update and explanation was awaited. Cllr Blanks stated that this was not what was agreed, and that EFDC should adhere to the agreement. Cllr Grigg suggested any correspondence should be copied to Glenn Chipp and Derek McNab.

#### **C16.133 CEMETERY – VISIT BY ENVIRONMENTAL SUB COMMITTEE REGARDING ITEMS AND ADORNMENTS ON PLOTS**

Members noted the discussion that took place at the Environmental Committee Meeting regarding the placing of plastic flowers, ornaments, etc., on graves. The Clerk placed on record that she had contacted Tim Morris, Chief Executive of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management, ICCM, to ask his opinion with regard to removing items, and copies of the relevant paperwork was attached to the agenda. This states that owners of the graves would need to be consulted, notices would need to be placed in the cemetery and a notice period would need to be given for the removal of such items, and then the Parish Council would have to arrange for the removal and secure storage of the items, all of which would need to be clearly labelled.

The Clerk expressed her concern that if the Committee / Council decided to take this course of action, as Clerk to the Council she would be unhappy to write to grave owners as owners may subsequently involve the newspapers and this would result in the Parish Council receiving 'bad press'. This action also goes directly against the

advice given to the Council by the ICCM. However, this would not stop this Council taking this action if this is what was agreed.

Four Members of the Environmental Committee had attended the Cemetery immediately following the meeting, and upon returning to the Parish Council Office, the Clerk was instructed to compile a letter to be sent to Plot Owners advising that all plots should be cleared. The Chairman of the Environmental Committee has advised that he would sign the letter when it has been compiled. The Clerk advised the four Members that she would draw up a letter, but it would need to be agreed at a full Council meeting. A copy of this proposed letter was attached to the agenda.

Cllr Bedford stated that whatever decision was taken, the Parish Council needed to be fair to everybody. Cllr Stallan stated that he remembered when this happened last time, and that it caused many issues and a lot of bad press. Cllr Stallan stated that he didn't have a problem with a letter being sent, as these are the rules and they must be adhered to, however this should be dealt with very sensitively. Cllr Mrs Jackman MBE suggested perhaps a press release should be sent out before the letter is sent explaining the problem so people are not so shocked when a letter is received. Cllr Stallan stated that this could have the counter effect in that plot owners would say they were not advised before it was made public.

Cllr Tyler asked if any complaints had actually been received, to which the Clerk confirmed there had been a couple. The Chairman reminded Members that this was a lawn cemetery, and as such should look like a lawn. Cllr Bedford suggested that whatever letter is constructed it should be with kindness and consideration.

Cllr Clegg stated that however this is dealt with, it should be handled sensitively, and that perhaps the Parish Council should take some more time to consider this further, with new letters being drafted and brought forward to the Parish Council meeting, perhaps without the wording 'excessive ornaments'. Cllr Mrs Grigg suggested the Clerk contact ICCM again asking advice about what wording could be used in a consultation letter.

It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would contact ICCM regarding the suggested content, and that three alternative letters would be made available at the March Parish Council meeting for consideration.

#### **C16.134 SUPERFAST BROADBAND – LETTER FROM ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

Members **NOTED** the letter and documentation which had been received from Essex County Council regarding broadband coverage in Hastingwood. The Clerk has spoken to the Project Officer advising that the Parish Council does not have enough staffing resources to contact residents in all these locations, however this could be placed on Parish Notice boards and also into the local Hastingwood Magazine unless Members have any other views.

#### **C16.135 PARISH COUNCIL – FOUNDATION STATUS**

In order for this Council to put forward its application for 'Foundation Status' the following was **APPROVED** by a **RESOLUTION** of the Council:

- i) The Council confirms that the following documentation is on the Council's



website:

- Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
  - Code of Conduct
  - Councillors Register of Interests
  - Publication Scheme
  - Last annual return
  - Transparent information about Council payments
  - A calendar of all meetings including the annual meeting of electors
  - Minutes for at least one year of Full Council meetings and all committee meetings
  - Current agendas
  - The budget and precept information for the current and two previous financial years
  - Complaints procedure
  - Council contact details and Councillors information in line with the transparency code
  - Action plan for the current year
  - Evidence of consulting the community
  - Publicity advertising the Council activities
  - Evidence of participating in the town and country planning system
- ii) To note that all these documents are available for inspection by appointment at the Parish office
- iii) The Council confirms by resolution that the following have been achieved:
- A risk management scheme
  - A register of assets
  - Contracts for all members of staff
  - Disciplinary and grievance procedures
  - A policy for training new staff and Councillors
  - A record of all training undertaken by staff and Councillors in the last year
  - A clerk who has achieved 12 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) points in the last year

### **C16.136 TREE RISK ASSESSMENT**

Members recalled an item from the 2015 minutes Item Number **C15.076 Tree Risk Assessment** where Councillors noted that as part of this Council's Health and Safety obligations, it should complete a schedule of risk assessments for all the trees on Parish Council owned land. The frequency of these risk assessments should be based on a number of factors, including the frequency with which members of the public use the area, as well as the impact of a H&S failure. Attached to that agenda was a comprehensive Draft Risk Assessment schedule for trees in the Parish. The PFO stated that somebody with a knowledge of trees should undertake the risk assessments.

During this meeting, Cllr Stallan queried what the EFDC lease stated regarding the Bluemans End land, in terms of who would be responsible for completing the H&S checks under the lease. The PFO stated that it would be the Parish Council who hold the lease and as such the responsibility. Cllr Stallan requested this was formally checked so that the Parish Council does not do something that is the responsibility of

the District Council. This was, and it was confirmed it was the Parish Council's Responsibility.

Cllr Mulliner suggested perhaps the Preservation Society should be approached, or EFDC Countrycare, and it was agreed that both of these organisations were viable options and should be approached. Cllr Clegg stated that he would also ask the contractor who completed the Pike Way tree works to quote. This was not forthcoming, and neither group confirmed that they would be willing to be responsible to undertake a job of this magnitude, which carried such responsibility.

Therefore, it now falls to the Parish Council to undertake the relevant Risk Assessment. The Principal Financial Officer gave a short report, and provided details of a quote received, and it was **AGREED** to progress with this quote and the tree risk assessment.

#### **C16.137 FORTHCOMING DATES**

Members **NOTED** the calendar of parish council and planning meeting dates for 2017 as attached to the agenda, together with the following:

- The Annual Allotment Meeting - Sunday 19th March 2017
- The Annual Civic Awards and Annual Parish Assembly - Monday 20th March 2017

#### **C16.138 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

As the Agenda contained Exempt (pink) pages, or an item needs to be discussed confidentially, the following motion was proposed by the Chairman - "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." All public and press left the meeting.

#### **C16.139 LAND AT THE FRONT OF THE PARADE OF SHOPS NORTH WEALD**

Cllr Bedford updated Councillors on conversations he had held with both the Clerk and ECC Cllr Jackson regarding this area. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that the Parish Council should write to ECC Estates for further clarification.

Meeting closed 21.45

Date .....

Sign:.....