



DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting: COUNCIL

Date: 7th January 2019

Time: 7.30PM

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

PRESENT:

Councillors (11) A Buckley (Chairman) B Clegg, B Bartram, N Bedford, G Mulliner, A Tyler, R Spearman, Mrs A Grigg, B Eldridge, Mrs S Jackman, MBE, M Stroud

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan Deluca - Clerk

Joanna Tyler – Senior Administrative Officer

Also in Attendance (1)

Essex County Councillor Anthony Jackson

Members of the Public (2)

Members of the Press (1)

The Chairman welcomed Councillors and visitors to the meeting and gave a brief update with regard to Councillor Stallan.

C18.075 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)

NOTED that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Blanks, Mrs Godwin-Brown and Stallan

C18.076 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

No other absences were recorded.

C18.077 MINUTES

Councillor Mrs Grigg asked for a correction to spelling to be made under Questions From Members of the Public. Cllr Bartram referred to Other Absences and stated that he had sent his apologies via email to the Clerk on the day of the meeting. The Clerk confirmed that the amendments would be made, following which the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday, 3rd December 2018 were **AGREED**.

Councillor Clegg stated that the comments that he made with regard to the 19% increase to the Precept had not been recorded in the Minutes and he had spoken to the Principal Financial Officer with regard to this. Although Cllr Clegg is unhappy with the increase, he supported it because of the financial implications of various matters that will happen in 2019. The Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Meeting held on Monday, 17th December 2018 were **AGREED**.

Councillors **NOTED** the Minutes of the Parish Hall at Thornwood Common Management Committee Meeting held on Thursday, 6th December 2018.

C18.078 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Spearman declared a disclosable pecuniary interest with regard to item number

10, Parish Council Representation at Examination in Public of the Local Plan.

C18.079 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman asked the Members of the Public present if they had any questions they would like to ask. One asked what was meant by Declarations of Interest. The Clerk referred the member of the public to the Agenda which clearly stated the meaning. The member of the public asked why a Councillor would not have to elaborate on the reason for declaring an interest in a particular item. The Clerk stated that a Councillor does not have to give an in depth reason for declaring an interest. The member of the public stated that he wanted to know the materiality of the interest. The Clerk stated that a Councillor does not have to do that unless he or she wanted to. The Clerk asked Cllr Spearman if he wished to advise the member of the public the reason for his Declaration of Interest. Cllr Spearman stated that he is open about the fact that he has an interest in the Local Plan because of the land that he owns.

The Chairman asked if there were any other questions and reiterated that Agenda Item number 5 is specifically for Questions from Members of the Public, he added, that there would be no opportunity to ask questions under any other item. A member of the public referred to a previous balance sheet that he had and questioned an amount of £10,000 which had been set aside. The Clerk advised that the funds had been set aside to be used for legal representation for the Local Plan, should it be required. The member of the public stated that when an enquiry had been made regarding this, he had been informed that the Local Plan was self funding. The Clerk explained that the reason £10,000 had been put aside for legal representation for the Local Plan was in case the Parish Council had to engage a barrister or solicitor for the representation of the residents of the Parish. The member of the public continued to question this matter and the Clerk suggested that he may wish to visit the Parish Office, should there be any further information that he required.

The Chairman asked if there were any other questions. A member of the public stated that he may wish to ask questions later in the meeting dependant on the discussions resulting from the agenda items to be discussed. The Clerk reiterated that questions may only be asked by members of the public under item number 5, explaining that if not, the member of the public would need to visit the Parish Office to speak to her in person. The member of the public continued to question the response given. The Clerk reiterated that the member of the public would be welcome to visit the Parish Office during opening times to ask any question, alternatively an appointment could be arranged. The member of the public asked the Clerk why Questions from Members of the Public could not be placed at the end of the agenda items. The Clerk referred to the Local Government Act 1974 and stated that there is a set procedure for agendas and the Parish Council has to follow this exactly. The member of the public continued to question the response given. The Chairman called for order. Essex County Councillor Jackson stated that he believed that the problem was that there needed to be a distinction between a public meeting and a meeting in public. He stated that this is a meeting in public, adding that the rules of which were as described by the Clerk. An element of many public meetings do not have questions from members of the public, the point being

that members of the public have the opportunity to ask a question, they are not to take part in subsequent items to be discussed during the meeting. ECC Cllr Jackson stated that these are not rules that are made by councils.

A member of the public referred to the balance sheet that he had obtained and queried an amount of money spent on electrical works at the Parish Hall in Thornwood. The member of the public stated that it was his understanding that payment for any project undertaken at the Parish Hall was from grant funding, not from the precept. The Clerk stated that this was dependant on the work carried out, explaining that some maintenance work has to be funded by the Parish Council and some works are funded by grants. The member of the public stated that he was specifically referring to electrical works that were carried out, amounting to £3,000. The Clerk asked the Senior Administrative Officer if she could look to see what the amount quoted referred to. The member of the public stated that he wished to ask a question about the car park by the parade of shops in North Weald, in particular with regard to the widening of the entrance. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council obtained an agreement with the owner of the car park, who had agreed that it could be widened slightly. The member of the public asked if a Risk Assessment had been carried out, who it had been carried out by and was a copy available. The Clerk confirmed that a Risk Assessment had been undertaken by the Principal Financial Officer who had been trained to these and that she would ask the PFO to make a copy available on her return to work from annual leave. The member of the public continued to question this matter. Cllr Bedford suggested to the Chairman that as the matter being discussed was not an agenda item, the question should be put in writing or the member of the public could visit the Parish Office to speak to the Clerk in person, once the Clerk has had an opportunity to investigate the matter further. The member of the public stated that he had enquired about this matter and was informed that the information was contained in the minutes on the Parish Council website. The Clerk suggested that if the member of the public could put all of the questions in writing or via email to her, she would investigate the matters further and provide him with the answers.

C18.080 ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL STREET LIGHTS

Councillors *NOTED* that the Clerk had received notification regarding the street lights that are situated on roads that are the usual responsibility of Essex County Council and which have a partial darkness policy, ie., switched off partially during the night. It had been suggested that the Parish Council may wish to take responsibility for the lighting of these roads (as some other Towns and Parish have – it is thought, during the partial lighting time). It is understood that the cost of this is expected to be £10,000 per annum and would have to be paid by the Parish Council. It is not clear as to whether any maintenance or other associated costs are included with this amount.

The Clerk informed Members that she had initially received an email regarding this matter from Cllr Mrs Grigg, which stated that Cllr Whitbread had advised her that Essex County Council are looking to turn the street lights back on. The Clerk stated that she then received a further email sent on behalf of Cllr Whitbread, which advised that Cllr Bedford may wish to speak further on this matter. The Clerk asked Cllr Bedford if he would like to speak. Cllr Bedford stated that his view is that

the Parish Council should not be spending £10,000 on ECC street lights. He advised Members that his reason for this is that he often travels into the village during the time when the lights are turned off and he did not see what difference it would make to safety and security within the village. He stated that residents would be more likely to take notice of a burglar with a torch if the street lights are turned off, than if they were on. Cllr Bedford stated that he believed that £10,000 would be better spent on other projects and would be totally against the request. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that her position was that Cllr Whitbread wanted to get costs for all the parishes and towns and he had asked her to send the email to the Clerk. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that personally she had not experienced any strong representation from residents that they would want the lights turned back on. She added that residents probably would like them turned back on, but only if ECC take on the costs, not the Parish Council. The Chairman stated that the actual cost is £10,243.05, however it is not known how many lights this would represent. The Clerk stated that ECC have not given a definitive number with regard to this. Cllr Clegg stated that Theydon Bois had no street lights adding that it is not statistically proven that there is any increase in the crime rate when comparing living in Theydon Bois to Epping. Cllr Clegg added that he agreed with Cllr Bedford's comments and expressed concern that the Parish Council had already set aside funds for a police person, the library and now street lights, asking the question where would the requests end. Cllr Clegg stated that he is against the request and would be against any further increase in the precept to cover the street lights. Cllr Bedford stated that going forward, if the Parish Council were to pay the £10,000 for the street lights, it would be contributing to the carbon footprint. Cllr Bedford proposed that the request to fund the street lights be rejected, the proposal was seconded by Cllr Jackman, MBE. All voted unanimously to reject the request.

C18.081 CONFIRMATION OF PRECEPT

The Chairman referred Councillors to the Finance and General Purposes Minutes (F&GP) attached to the agenda. Councillors **NOTED** that it was necessary to formally **RESOLVE** to accept the recommended Precept figure as agreed at the F&GP committee meeting held on 17th December 2018 as follows:-

It had been RESOLVED at that meeting to put a recommendation to full Council to request a precept of £219,256 for period 2019/2020.

Councillors **NOTED** that all documentation relating to the Budget and Precept could be found in the F&GP Minutes. Once formally agreed, this figure would be sent to Epping Forest District Council.

Councillor Bartram **PROPOSED** that Councillors **RESOLVED** to accept the recommended Precept figure. The proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE. A vote was taken as follows:-

10 in favour
1 abstention

C18.082 ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL LIBRARY CONSULTATION – NORTH WEALD

The Chairman gave a brief report regarding the meeting of the Working Group which was held on Wednesday, 2nd January 2019. The Chairman stated that Councillors agreed what action should be taken to promote awareness of the

consultation to residents. A copy of the Action Plan was tabled at the meeting. The Senior Administrative Officer briefly covered what actions had been completed. A member of the public interrupted the meeting and stated that he had been unsuccessful in completing the consultation questionnaire via Essex County Council's website. The Clerk suggested that he mention this to ECC Cllr Jackson following the meeting.

Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE, informed Members that the possibility of holding a public meeting to alert residents to the threat of North Weald Library being closed, had been discussed by the Working Group. Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE, referred to a press article regarding Galleywood Library who had received backing from their MP to keep the library open. Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE, stated that Cllr Susan Barker should be invited to attend a public meeting, along with Essex County Councillors and MPs who represent residents in this Parish. Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE, suggested that the press and Everything Epping Forest could also be invited to attend to spread awareness of what is happening. The Chairman stated that he believed that this suggestion would be covered at the next meeting of the Working Group.

The Chairman informed Councillors that the banners were expected to be delivered on Wednesday, following which a photo shoot would be arranged with Everything Epping Forest for when the first banner is put up outside the Library. The Chairman encouraged Councillors to attend and advised that they would be contacted with regard to a time to meet at the Library. Cllr Stroud asked if the Parish Council's Twitter account could also be put to use to spread awareness. Both the Clerk and the Chairman confirmed that it would be. The Chairman stated that Councillors would need to decide what the next step forward would be, adding that there were several different scenarios. The Chairman mentioned the drop in sessions taking place week commencing Monday, 28 January, which would allow members of the public to visit the library to ask ECC staff questions regarding the consultation. The Chairman advised that ECC Cllr Jackson would be in attendance at the library on the 28th. ECC Cllr Jackson advised that he had a very useful meeting (with the Chairman and Clerk) in which they had discussed the best way for the Parish Council to present its case to get the maximum impact, adding that he undertook to support that.

C18.083 LIBRARY ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE NOMINATION

The Clerk reminded Councillors that the Parish Council had recently agreed to nominate relevant buildings / land in the Parish as Assets of Community Value, the first nomination being North Weald Library. Councillors **NOTED** that on 19th December 2018, the Clerk had received notification from EFDC that the nomination had *"failed to meet the criteria set out in Section 88(1)(a) of the Localism Act, in that whilst it is currently used as a Library there is insufficient information contained within the Community Nomination as to the current usage of the library to enable me to determine that the North Weald Library furthers the social wellbeing and social interests of the Local Community"*. The Clerk read out the contents of the letter received. The Clerk informed Members that after looking at the law and the reasons, nowhere within that law and the reasons does it state that the Parish Council has to fulfil that criteria. In light of this, the Clerk advised that she had arranged a meeting with Cllr Whitbread on 18th January. Cllr Bedford

asked if the Clerk still had the statistics for the number of people who visit the Library. The Clerk confirmed that she did, however, advised Members that the Parish Office had been told to no longer keep a record of visitor numbers. Cllr Bedford suggested that one of the key groups which should be targeted (referring to the library consultation and the photo shoot discussed earlier) are the older residents who would benefit from the retention of the library services. The Clerk stated that she did explain, during the recent meeting that she had with ECC Cllr Jackson, that the Library is not just used as a Library, it is a social place, it is used as a meeting place for mums and tots on Thursday mornings, it is used for computers, it is a community service. Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE, stated that if the Parish Council decides to hold a public meeting regarding the Library (as discussed earlier in the meeting) these are the types of things that need to be highlighted. Following further discussion it was agreed that the next meeting of the Working Group would be held on Wednesday, 23rd January 2019. The Clerk advised that ECC Cllr Jackson would be attending the Library on Monday, 28th January, during Parish Office opening hours, to be available for anyone to discuss the Library Consultation. The Clerk stated that she hoped that a representative from ECC Library staff would also be present on that day.

C18.084 PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION AT EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC OF THE LOCAL PLAN

The Clerk reminded Members that they were going to agree details for the Parish Council Representation of the examination in public of the Epping Forest District Local Plan. The Clerk advised that there was one barrister who had confirmed that he would be available for all of the days, apart from one, who is a gentleman from Attwater & Liell. The Clerk stated that she needed to have Members agreement that they would be happy with this one barrister. Cllr Eldridge asked the Clerk if she knew anything about this gentleman. The Clerk confirmed that the barrister had represented three different areas, including Hertford. Cllr Mrs Jackman, MBE, asked if the Clerk had received recommendations. The Clerk confirmed that she had and reminded Councillors that the barrister may not be required to attend every day, if at all. The Clerk stated that the funds are available, should the Parish Council need the barrister to represent the people of North Weald. All Members **AGREED** with the appointment of the barrister.

**C18.085 SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA ITEM
LOCAL SERVICES FUND APPLICATION DECISION**

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk had been successful in obtaining grant funding from the Local Services Fund for a Community Handyman. The total amount awarded for 3 years is £7,000. The Clerk advised that one of the conditions of the grant is that it must be spent on handyman duties only. The Local Services Fund would not support any duties carried out for the role of a Community Warden.

Councillor Bedford congratulated the Clerk and stated that any grant funding is Beneficial to members of the Parish and asked that thanks be recorded to the Clerk. The Clerk informed Members that she had also received £11,000 in grant funding from the CIF which is to be used for the play areas. Cllr Mulliner asked the Clerk if she thought the Parish Council would save money by having a handyman. The Clerk stated that she believed that it would, advising that the majority of the work

undertaken would be at the allotment sites. Following further discussion, all Members **AGREED** that the grant awarded by the Local Service Fund should be accepted.

The Chairman informed Members that, thanks to their generosity, the Christmas Party held at Norway House had been a great success. The Chairman circulated copies of Thank You letters received from the children.

The Clerk referred to one final item regarding the Local Plan and asked Cllr Mrs Grigg if she could answer a question that the Principal Financial Officer had asked with regard to the numbers of housing, stating that Cllr Mrs Grigg had made a comment with regard to the Parish Council making comment not just on infrastructure but also on the numbers of houses. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that she would come back to the Clerk with regard to the question, following a meeting that she would be attending on the 17th January. The Clerk confirmed that she had received comments from ECC Cllr Jackson regarding Gilston, in particular with regard to The Ridge. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that she would be concerned about the infrastructure there and mentioned the possible extension to the transport route which could be detrimental to the Epping Forest area, bringing more traffic from Harlow, down through Thornwood, down towards Epping Station. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that although this would be beneficial to Harlow, she had great concern for Epping Forest.

The Chairman asked ECC Cllr Jackson if he would like to add any comments. Cllr Jackson stated that his concern is with regard to the Latton Bush proposals. He advised that Epping Forest District Council's own appointed consultants had recommended that development should not be on the ridge line but only on the North side, which is his view too. Cllr Jackson stated that the area is littered with historical relics, which Essex County Council records will show, including a Roman Road. Cllr Jackson stated that he does not have a problem with the houses, but it is his view that they should not be on the ridge line.

Meeting closed: 8.30 pm

Signed

Date