



MINUTES

Meeting: COUNCIL

Date: 3 November 2014

Time: 7.30 PM

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

PRESENT:

Councillors (8) C Hawkins (Chairman), B Eldridge, B Clegg, T Blanks, P Collins
G Mulliner, A Buckley, R Spearman

Also in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca – Clerk to the Council
Adriana Jones – Finance and Administrative Officer

Members of the Public (0)

Members of the Press (0)

C14.091 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (7)

NOTED that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs
E Godwin-Brown, Ms Adams, Mrs Grigg, Bartram, Stallan, Bedford and McCormack.

C14.092 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

No other absences were recorded.

C14.093 MINUTES

Members *NOTED* the following amendments:

- Cllr Clegg - C14.082 (p6) - Should be 'offer' not 'officer'.

Subject to this amendment, Members *APPROVED*, as a correct record, the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 6th October 2014, and noted the minutes of the October meeting of the Parish Hall and Playing Field Management Committee of Thornwood Common.

C14.094 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mulliner, Collins, Blanks, Hawkins and Buckley all declared a non-pecuniary interest in any item relating to the Royal British Legion, by virtue of being members.

C14.095 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

NOTED there were no members of the public present.

C14.096 CLERKS UPDATE AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Members *NOTED* the following Communications and Correspondence:-

CLERKS UPDATE

Date	Reported By or Action Initiated By	Regarding	Date Add Action	Further Action Taken
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			Taken	
October	Clerk	Play Area /Weald Common	Ongoing	Play Area opened on 12 October, various snagging issues to be resolved – Meeting with Contractor on site on 5 th November - Old Play area fence has been repaired – still awaiting response from Police as to who is responsible for paying for repair.
October	Clerk	Brent House Farm	Ongoing	Various Meetings with EFDC Planning Officer and Trustee re Legal Agreements and S.106 – and advise re forthcoming grant apps
October	Parish Council Staff	Remembrance Sunday – All Events	Ongoing	All Arrangements including Parish Council Events and Royal British Legion Events
October	Clerk	Queens Hall Charity	Ongoing	Various Matters Ongoing
October	Principal Financial Officer	Budget & Precept	Ongoing	Training Meeting – 29 th October
October	Principal Financial Officer	Resilience Training	24 Oct	Training
October	Clerk	Larger Local Council Forum (LLCF)	Oct	LLCF Forum at EALC – National Association of Local Councils in attendance re successor to Quality Council Scheme – starting in January 2015
October	Clerk & Senior Admin Officer	Local Councils The Standards of Practice Scheme Award - 3 Levels Foundation; Quality; Gold	23 October	Ongoing – The Clerk would like this Council to aim for the Gold Award – A verbal report was given at the meeting and a further report will be given at the Budget and Precept Meeting
October	Parish Council Staff	Various Env Matters	Ongoing	Details on Env Mtg Agenda
October	Parish Office Staff	H&S for Councillors	Ongoing	Cllr Spearman booked on H&S Course for Legionella and 1 course is available for Cllr Bartram however the course for Cllr Bartram is not available until early 2015.
October	Parish Office Staff	Neighbourhood Plan	Ongoing	Item on Agenda for discussion
2015	EALC Training Courses	Various Training Courses Available during 2015	2015	Please advise the Clerk to obtain details.
October	Karen Fox	New Member of Staff Commenced	October 13	Ongoing

Councillors **NOTED** that communication had been received from Father Rodley regarding a Carol Service he was organising at St Andrews School on 17th December 2014 at 6.30pm, entitled the Silent Night Carol Service. The Clerk read out the content of the email. This event would be linked to the WWI 100th Anniversary. All Councillors were invited to take part, and were welcome to do a

reading or be involved in another way. Councillors were asked to contact the Clerk for further information. Cllr Collins stated that Farther Rodley was very active in the community and should be supported. The Chairman confirmed he would be attending.

C14.097 REPORTS AND MEMBERS REPORTS

a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman confirmed that bulb planting had recently taken place in conjunction with some local organisations, and thanked those Councillors who attended and assisted. Despite being informed by the police that he could expect a call from the parent of the child who damaged the fence at Weald Common Play Area, he was still awaiting a call. The Clerk stated that the police had contacted her asking if the Parish Council had paid the bill, to which she confirmed they had not, however the contact from police in general had been extremely poor with the responsibility being passed over to numerous individuals.

b) **Vice-Chairman's Report** – The Vice Chairman reported that he had been contacted by a local resident regarding the Brent House Farm development, and the he had confirmed there were no three storey buildings.

c) **District Councillors Report** – none

d) Councillors Reports

Cllr Clegg stated that the Parish Council had received a request from a local resident adjacent to the Pike Way green requesting the Parish Council cut down some trees which back onto his property. After discussion with the Clerk, Chris Neilan, Principal Officer, Landscape & Trees Team EFDC, met with Cllr Clegg on site to discuss the issue. Following this meeting, the Parish Council obtained a quote from a known contractor for the cutting of 10 trees, which was felt to be very reasonable. A second contractor was contacted to quote, however had not responded.

Chris Neilan had suggested the tree be pruned at ground level, the reason being that if they are simply trimmed back or cut half way, this will be something that needs to be completed every couple of years. In addition, a quote will be obtained to cut back the area by the substation at this location, clearing it of brambles and various dumped rubbish. The cost will be around £1,200, but this will depend on how much chipping can be disposed of onto scrub land without causing too much of a menace. Cllr Collins suggested Countrycare may be interested in the chippings, the Clerk said she would contact them and ask.

Cllr Collins asked if the roots were going to be ground out, to which Cllr Clegg stated they wouldn't as the trees are very close to a culvert. Cllr Eldridge suggested you could place tar over the top of the stump. It was agreed to leave this to the contractor to apply the best method. It was noted that Chris Neilan will be monitoring these works. Cllr Collins **PROPOSED**, and Cllr Eldridge

SECONDED that these works takes place. It was noted that dependent on the weather, the Pike Way green could be churned up a bit due to machinery needing to be located on the green, however this was unavoidable.

Cllr Blanks reported that in light of the concerns regarding Edge Designs and its financial instability, it is very likely that the Parish Council will change their software supplier for the accounts beginning April 2014. It was noted this may be more expensive, but would provide the parish council will greater stability and safety.

e) Highways

Councillors *NOTED* that the main High Road in North Weald had now been resurfaced. The Clerk reported that there had not been a response from ECC Cllr Johnson regarding this Councils invitation to attend a Parish Council meeting. The Clerk would continue to chase.

f) Environmental Issues

Cllr Mulliner reported that two unused allotments at North Weald had already been reallocated. Bulbs had been planted in Blenheim Square, the Memorial Playing Fields and at the entrance to the Cemetery. The latest ARD Quarterly Inspection report had been received, and the Environmental Committee had reviewed its recommendations and any necessary action agreed. A study had been undertaken concerning the creation of a flower bed outside the shops in North Weald. The tree lighting event on the Village Green in North Weald should be going ahead on 5th December. The Clerk stated that she had spoken with the Parish Councils light maintenance contractor who said due to the wet weather he would be unable to get a cherry picker onto the green in order to erect the lights. A tree had been ordered. Trish Moxley had attended the recent Environmental Committee meeting at the request of Chris Neilan to discuss the possibility of placing new trees in the area, and had been advised to contact the Preservation Society in North Weald.

g) Neighbourhood Action Panel Minutes

The Clerk stated that she had received the latest minutes should anybody like a copy.

C14.098 FINANCIAL REPORTS

a) List of Cheques & Monthly Statement of Accounts

Members *APPROVED* the list of cheques, which were signed up to 31st October 2014 and noted the income received and the account balances.

b) Change of Banking Arrangements

In 2011, Parish Council were given the freedom to make use of modern banking methods such as electronic banking, providing safeguards were put into place to made to ensure this is no misuse of the system. Earlier this year, section 150(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 (which governed the stewardship of money by

Local Councils by requiring that two members of the Council are required to sign a cheque) was repealed, meaning this is no longer a legal requirement. This does however remain a requirement within the Councils Financial Regulations, as it is deemed good practice.

The Council must regularly review the effectiveness of its arrangements to protect public money, and to ensure safe and efficient arrangements are in place to do so.

In light of these recent legislative changes, together with historical issues experienced with the Councils current Bank, the Clerk and Principal Finance Officer had looked at how other Parish Councils deal with their banking arrangements. After these investigations, Unity Bank seem to offer the most appropriate service, specifically tailored to Parish Councils. The Principal Finance and Admin Officer met with Unity Bank and discussed the arrangements that this Councils requires. Attached to the Agenda was a proposal put forward by Unity for the provision of such Services. Council considered this proposal, and **AGREED** to move the councils banking arrangements to Unity. The need for two authorised signatories would remain.

c) BUDGET / PRECEPT

Council were reminded that the Budget and Precept Meeting will take place on 17th November at 7.30pm. Councillors were asked to confirm any issues / projects that they would like considered, as well as providing any associated financial documentation by Friday 7th November.

C14.099 ELECTRONIC MAIL

At the Meeting of the Parish Council on Monday 6th October the Clerk was tasked with asking the Auditor to confirm whether or not Councillors could receive documentation by electronic mail, at the request of Cllr Collins. Members would have received emails from both the Clerk and Cllr Collins in relation to electronic mail. As the Clerk stated in her previous email she would be providing Members with copies of the correspondence between herself and Cllr Collins and also the internal auditors comments.

The Clerk has reiterated that her concerns have always been many and varied at circulating documentation to Members relying solely on electronic means. Whilst she has received confirmation from the auditor that this is now permitted under legislation passed a short while ago, she is still not convinced that it is wholly the most efficient and effective means of passing information on to all Members of this council, and she still does have concerns for Members. She details, once again, these concerns below:

- 1 What if the Members Internet /Broadband is not working or is not of sufficient speed to download the documents
- 2 What if the link provided in the document does not work – how will the Member access the relevant document especially if it is over the weekend or in the evening

- and they cannot get in touch with someone to get the details
- 3 What happens in the case of large documents that need to be printed off – and need to be referred to at Parish Council Meetings – will the Members print these off and bring them along some documents can have 50 – 100 pages in total – which is a substantial amount of paper and printer ink for individual members to consider.
 - 4 In the case of Agendas these are hand delivered – once they are put through the letterbox how do we know that this is an actual delivery – if the Agendas are sent out electronically it would mean that the office would need individual councillors to confirm receipt of every agenda/document, and each Member would need to print off the agenda and bring the printed copy along with them to each meeting, agendas and associated documents could not be printed immediately prior to the meeting – there is simply not enough time for this action to be carried out.
 - 5 If the Clerk did not have an acknowledged receipt of delivery it would mean having to chase individual Members to confirm receipt.

The Clerk detailed the extract from the Internal Auditors email. The Principal Financial Officer also has some other concerns and will bring these to Members attention at the meeting.

“With regard to your and your member’s query, as far as I am aware, legislation has now been passed permitting the electronic provision of agendas and relevant papers (Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014). Having said that, it is obviously important that any Council ensures that all or part of its members are prepared to accept detail in electronic rather than hard copy format, also that an appropriate means of ensuring that such documentation is actually received and acknowledged by members.” Stuart Pollard.

The Clerk stated that if after taking all the above into consideration Councillors would like to receive documentation electronically, the Clerk will be sending ALL MEMBERS a document to sign to say that you have read and understood the possible pitfalls but you are still wishing to receive the documentation electronically.

The Clerk recently sent Members an email which was a response to a request by Cllr Collins, and also as a result of comments received from the Auditor which she is investigating further. It is understand that Members had received the email from Cllr Collins, and the Clerk advised all Members that she did not wish to engage in a ‘to and fro’ disagreement about this on email, therefore she would reproduce all previous 6 emails in full. Therefore, this matter had been placed on the Agenda with a recommendation that all Councillors are asked to make a declaration as to whether or not they wish to receive ALL items in an electronic format. If so they will then be asked to sign a document indicating this. Members **NOTED** that it cannot be the Clerks responsibility as to the method of delivery for each item, ie what is electronic and what is hard copy as this is purely subjective – ie the Clerk makes the decision it can go out electronically and the Councillors disagree.

Cllr Collins stated that his original suggestion was to help the Clerk with workload, and not increase it, and there had been a lot of paperwork already supplied about this issue which was counterproductive. Councillors **AGREED** not to move forward with the electronic distribution of paperwork at this time.

C14.100 COMMITTEE STRUCTURES

At the October meeting, the Clerk had circulated a report and documentation in relation to a review of Committee Structures. Members were asked to review the suggested new structure and to bring back any comments that they may have to this meeting. Copies of the New Structure were sent out to those Members who were not in attendance following the meeting, and again with the Agenda showing them that this matter would be discussed at this meeting.

The Clerk stated that this new structure would give each Committee a Terms of Reference so they could make delegated decision and have the power to carry out those decisions (with the exception of the Personnel Committee). This was supported in the latest publication 'Local Councils Explained'. Cllr Collins stated that if all Councillors had the agenda items in advance, it would be up to individual Councillors to decide if they wanted to sit on the Committee. Cllr Mulliner asked if there would be a financial limit for each Committee, to which the Clerk confirmed there would be, but that not all Committees spend money. Councillor Eldridge **PROPOSED**, and Cllr Buckley **SECONDED** that the amended Committee Structure be adopted. This was **AGREED** by way of a unanimous vote.

C14.101 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

At the last Meeting Members were asked to review Standing Orders. The Clerk had circulated a number of amendments at the meeting, and Members were asked to look at these amendments and advise the Clerk at the next meeting if they were happy with these, and bring any comments that they had to this meeting. Copies of the Revision to Standing Orders were sent out to those Members who were not in attendance following the meeting, and again with the Agenda showing them that this matter would be discussed at this meeting. Members **ADOPTED** the updated Standing Orders as circulated.

C14.102 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN NORTH WEALD BASSETT AREA DESIGNATION

Councillors **NOTED** that EFDC are in the 6 weeks consultation period for the Designation of the Neighbourhood Area. A Working Group meeting has been arranged for Friday 21st November at the Parish offices. Councillors are invited to attend to agree a recommendation to go to full Council in terms of how the Neighbourhood Plan programme should progress.

C14.103. PARISH HALL AT THORNWOOD COMMON

As the Responsible Person for Health and Safety at the Parish Hall has not yet been agreed or trained, the Portable Appliance Testing is due to be carried out. Councillor Spearman **PROPOSED**, and Councillor Mulliner **SECONDED** that as it is no longer

a legal requirement that these checks are completed, this should not be done. All Councillors agreed.

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk would be liaising with Cllr Spearman and Cllr Bartram regarding being trained as the responsible person.

C.14.104 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The Clerk updated Members on the progress of Remembrance Sunday preparation, stating that at present there were 84 people attending the lunch. There would be four representatives from Norway this year - 2 from the Defence Attaché's office, and 2 pilots. Cllr Mulliner asked if attendees would be allocated a set at the table, to which the Clerk confirmed they would be. Cllr Bedford had confirmed he was available to complete the PA set up.

C14.105 EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Members were asked if they wished to make nominations to the EFDC Citizen of the Year Scheme. Nominations should be for someone who has shown outstanding courage, done something of outstanding benefit to the community, shown extraordinary commitment in their field or towards achieving a particular goal. The recipient must be a resident of Epping Forest. There were no nominations put forward.

C14.106 NORWAY HOUSE

a) Request for support for Lottery Funding Bid

The Clerk informed members that she had been approached by Norway House (run by EFDC) to assist with a funding application, asking if the Parish Council would obtain funding on behalf of Norway House. Councillors expressed their concern that doing so could jeopardise any funding opportunity for this Parish Council going forward. Councillors again expressed their concern that each year every Parish/Town Council is asked to provide funding for Norway House, however very few ever do. After discussion, it was **AGREED** not to apply for funding via the Lottery for reasons that it would jeopardise any future application by this Council.

b) Invitation to Members to attend Mural Unveiling Event on 20th November
Extract from email Invitation below

"Over recent months we have been working with the Arts team at EFDC to create a mural for our dining room. On 20th November between 3.30pm – 5pm we will be having a mural unveiling followed by a tour of the building. I would like to invite the members of North Weald Parish Council to this event". Councillors **NOTED** this invitation.

C14.108 EFDC COMMUNITY TREE STRATEGY

This issue was covered under Minute number C14.097(f).

Meeting closed: 20.50 pm

Signed

Date