



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 4th September 2023

Time: 7.30PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (12) A Buckley (Chairman), Mrs S Hawkins, T Blanks, B Clegg, R Spearman, Mrs S Jackman MBE, A Tyler*, Mrs P Etherington, A Irvine, Ms D Wood, C Kinnear, N Born

* for part of meeting

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan Deluca - Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principle Finance Officer

Members of the Public (1) – PC Andy Cook for part of meeting

Members of the Press (1)

C23.059 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (0)

Apologies for lateness from Cllr Tyler.

C23.060 OTHER ABSENCES (3)

No apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Bedford, Irvine and Stroud.

C23.061 MINUTES

Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 3rd July 2023, and noted the Minutes of the Environmental & Open Spaces Meeting held on the 22nd June 2023 and the Parish Hall Liaison Meeting held on the 29th June 2023, all of which were attached to agenda.

C23.062 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

C23.063 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman invited PC Andy Cook to address Council. PC Cook provided a brief update on the crime statistics going back to 4th July, stating they were not too bad. There had been no dwelling or commercial burglaries, however there had been the theft of a motorhome from Blenheim Square and the theft of a vehicle from Leonard Davis House. A computer had been stolen from a car in School Green Lane, and there had been an attempted burglary at Bluemans End however the assailant was disturbed. There had been three reports of criminal damage, and a large disturbance at the Kings Head Public House in August. In all there were 61 reported incidents, not crimes, which have to be recorded. The Clerk asked if the second fire at the Bowls club had been reported as two fire engines were in attendance, to which PC Cook stated it had not and that the fire service would not report such crimes to the police. PC Cook stated that there were a few youths causing some issues in the village, notably in Emberson Way and Blenheim, and that the EFDC Community team were conducting frequent high visibility patrols. Cllr Etherington asked if the police knew where these youths were coming from, to which PC Cook stated it was all over.

Cllr Wood asked if the Police could do more to tackle this issue. PC Cook advised that there were ongoing investigations, and that anybody under aged 18 was classed as a child in terms of crime. Cllr Wood advised there continued to be parking problems on School Green Lane on both sides of the road. PC Cook was aware of this issue, stating that the Police's first course of action is to educate people, however he was considering whether or not to approach North Weald Village Life about this matter. The general position of the police is that if you can get a buggy or a wheelchair past on the pavement, then this would not be classed as an obstruction, and that the challenge is if you approach one person, you then need to approach them all.

[Cllr Tyler arrived]

Cllr Wood suggested that each and every car that is causing a problem should be approached. PC Cook advised this was an issue across the whole county, not just in North Weald. Cllr Hawkins advised there were similar problems in Woodside, and Cllr Blanks advised that there was also a similar issue on the High Road.

The Chairman thanked PC Cook for his update.

C23.064 REPORT OF THE CLERK

The Clerk provided the following reports:

- **RAAC** – The Clerk confirmed she had spent some time over the weekend looking at the guidance on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete, as this had featured heavily in the news and the Clerk was concerned the Thornwood Hall could be affected after looking at the panel sizes. The Clerk recommended that this Council consider instructing a structural engineer to conduct an assessment of the hall, given the age of the hall and the visible panels. Cllr Tyler advised that at a meeting he attended earlier in the day, there were a number of village hall that were having their utility services suspended just for this reason and stated that if the hall did have RAAC then it would not be covered under insurance. Cllr Spearman stated that the concrete panels outside the hall do not look structural, and that the roof was timber, however he would support getting a surveyor if the Council wanted it for peace of mind. Cllr Etherington said should this council take the advice of the insurance company to ensure users are safe. Cllr Tyler **PROPOSED** a structural engineer be appointed to complete and assessment for the presence of RAAC, and that the Clerk should also liaise with the Councils insurance company regarding this matter. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Etherington, and **AGREED** by way of unanimous vote.
- **Coffee With Cops** – The next event is scheduled to take place during October, and a venue will need to be arranged. The Clerk advised there had not been much take up at the last Thornwood event, so suggested North Weald Village Hall would be best place, although it is hired during the day. Cllr Etherington suggested the bar area could be sectioned off and used. Cllr Born suggested that a different approach should be taken, one of partnership working where other organisations are approached and a police presence attend these events. Cllr Tyler agreed stating he felt this was a great idea. The Clerk advised that PC Cook's shift would need to coincide with any such event, but that she was happy to speak with him regarding this. Cllr Mrs Jackman enquired as to whether or not North Weald Village Hall would need a RAAC inspection, to which the Clerk stated it would be up to the hall committee to make this decision as the hall was

not parish council owned, however she felt that the hall may have been built before the 1960 so RAAC may not be a concern. The Clerk confirmed she would speak with one of the committee members. Cllr Wood suggested that if a partnership working approach was being undertaken with Coffee with Cops, then perhaps this should be undertaken with the school as there were many newcomers to the village with children of different ages, and given the current issues in the village this may be worthwhile. Cllr Wood expanded stating it's all very well that we show support for Coffee with Cops, however it's not reaching the required demographic then there is no point. Cllr Etherington agreed, stating that this would leave a message that would resonate with parents. Cllr Wood confirmed she would speak with her contact.

- **Weald Common** – The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had received Grant Funding of £15,000 for a Dementia Friendly Area / Sensory Garden. The plans that have been drawn up include sensory garden areas, upgrade to footpath, talking benches, and signage. The funding is from the Shared Prosperity Fund, via EFDC. This project and application were created by Miss Tyler, the cost of which would be taken from the funding received. There two benches would have audio, and the Clerk had been active with the local community in trying to source difference audio messages, and had so far secured recording of planes and memories from Peter Gardner at the North Weald Museum, the EOR will be sending sounds of trains, Arthur Moreton will record some history concerning the airfield and the Norwegian connection, some school time memories, as well as other pertinent memories of flooding. It was noted that the benches had an audio chip in them. Cllr Etherington suggested that the sweet shop and haberdashery should be included in the stories. The Clerk advise she was meeting with a local resident on Wednesday who was assisting in finding people to provide audio recordings of memories.

The Chairman provided a brief update on Weald Common, stating that the official opening of the area is currently being arranged for September. The signage will be a type of way marker. There is also a bench being donated by North Weald Preservation Society which will have a plaque showing this as we received a sum of monies from them for this purpose. The Chairman showed an example of what the Interpretation Boards would look like. The woodland area was coming along quite well, and the Council grounds maintenance contractor would be clearing the weeds, with a full cut of the site being conducted before the official opening. The Chairman advised that the mulching put down had not been a great success when it came to the stopping of weeds, however as trees start to grow they will overtake the weeds. Areas had been identified for the benches (3 of them), and there will be recognition not only in terms of history but also those who assisted with the planting. Cllr Born asked if there had been any further action from Peer Group following the recent meeting, to which the Clerk advised there had not been however there is supposed to be another meeting in the coming months. The Chairman advised that the information boards would be coming soon and will be installed. These are glued over the boards, and you can stick another one over it if needed.

- **Planning Enforcement** – Liaising with local residents with regard to planning and enforcement enquiries. Cllr Mrs Jackman asked if there was any update on the enforcement matter at Marconi Bungalows, to which the Clerk advised she had not heard anything yet, however enforcement can often take many months to resolve, although confirmed that the lights had been removed and the wall lowered.

- **Cemetery Matters** -Dealing with interments and memorials. There have been more interments and memorials in the last 4 weeks than in last 4 months.
- **Audit** - Liaising with financial matters and external auditors' requests. Noted that the 22/23 Audit had been signed off by the Auditor however this was too late for this agenda.
- **Assets** – The Responsible Financial Officer has been visiting all the Parish Council owned Assets and a report is currently being compiled.
- **Battle of Britain Sunday** – Invites have been sent out for the event on Sunday 17th September at 3pm at the Cross of Sacrifice, in the grounds of St Andrews Church. Councillors who want to attend should advise the Clerk.
- **Remembrance Sunday Preparations** – **Sunday 12th November** – A meeting has been held and plans are underway for the event. It was suggested that as the Parish Council has arranged for the Norwegian Flag to be erected at the Debt of Honour (flagpole owned by EFDC), then we should keep the Union Flag flying on the main flagpole in the village. It has been further suggested that EFDC should also fly the RAF Flag. Members **NOTED** the letter attached to the agenda forwarded by NALC in regard to this year's Remembrance Sunday Events. The Clerk advised that the buglar had confirmed attendance, there were three sponsorships, there were no changes to the menu for the community luncheon, the cost of which would be £18 per head with the soup provided FOC, the North Weald Village Hall had been booked for lunch with the Thornwood Hall held as a reserve. A stock of wreaths had been ordered, however the order process had changed with direct payment no longer possible. In addition, the cost of a type c wreath had increased from £18.50 to £25.00. The Clerk had emailed the chair of the RBL to offer assistance, however had not heard back. Cllr Kinnear confirmed he was speak to the Chair about this. The formal invitations would be sent out at the end of September. Cllr Born referenced the recent occasion when a marching band walked through the village, and it was confirmed this was when 56 Squadron were given the Freedom of the District. The Clerk advised that the Arch Deacon would be conducting the service at the Debt of Honour, however was unsure if they would be doing church service. Cllr Tyler confirmed he had liaised with Mark Smith.
- **Parish Hall Matters** – **The Clerk has been researching the implications of 'Martyns Law' and the impact it could have on the Parish Hall if it is passed by the UK Government** - Martyn's Law is a proposed legislation that aims to improve the security and safety of public venues and spaces in the UK against terrorist attacks. It is named after Martyn Hett, who was one of the 22 victims of the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017. His mother, Figen Murray, has been campaigning for better security measures at public events and venues ever since. Martyn's Law would require venues and organisations to take steps to assess and mitigate the risk of terrorism, such as conducting security checks, installing CCTV cameras, training staff, and having emergency plans. The law would apply to different locations depending on their capacity and activity, with a standard tier for venues with more than 100 people and an enhanced tier for high-capacity locations. The government has published a draft bill for Martyn's Law in May 2023, and it is currently undergoing parliamentary scrutiny. Martyn's Law is intended to create a consistent and proportionate approach to protective security across the UK, as well as to honour the memory of Martyn Hett and all those affected by terrorism. The Clerk confirmed this would affect the Hall if the proposed legislation comes to fruition as many things would need to change or be in

place, or it could be useful to consider reducing the maximum numbers to 80 people. The Clerk confirmed she would report back at a later meeting.

- **All other Administrative & Matters on the Agenda** – The Clerk and Office staff have been working on other matters, some of which are not included within the Agenda.

C23.065 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – Nothing to report further to his Weald Common report earlier in the meeting.
- b) **Vice Chairman's Report** – No report.
- c) **District & County Councillors Reports** – No reports

- d) **Parish Councillors Reports**

Cllr Wood had been asked to raise the matter of York Road resurfacing, advising that the current state of the road was awful. The Clerk advised that residents needed to liaise with their County Councillor regarding this matter, albeit she was happy to field emails if they preferred to email her directly. Cllr Etherington advised that the alley way from Higham View to the main road was in a poor state, and the Clerk advised this was EFDCs responsibility, and confirmed she would raise this with Cllr Bedford.

Cllr Clegg confirmed that the Community Speedwatch Team had been very active, the latest figures in Weald Bridge Road showing that 15% of drivers are speeding. There were a couple of incidents, including a vehicle that swerved towards a lady working in her garden, however details of the registration plate had been obtained and duly reported, as it did not have tax nor an MOT and hasn't done for some time. Cllr Clegg advised the Mr Waters had spent 3 hours over the weekend speaking with residents of Weald Bridge Road who were happy and grateful with work the team were doing, and that it is possible up to five more volunteers could be on board. Cllr Clegg advised that the Parish Office staff had previously printed of 30MPH to be placed on wheelie bins, however these had very quickly faded, and asked if the Council would consider the purchase of official stickers, the cost of which is £120 for 100. These could then be spread around the local community.

Cllr Clegg advised that it was UK Road Safety Week in November, the target being speed, but that he would remind Councillors nearer the time. With regard to coffee with cops, Cllr Clegg stated that the Community Speedwatch team have requested on no less than three occasions the presence of police to assist them, however they were yet to turn up, so it was understandable that there was some apathy regarding attending the coffee with cops events. Cllr Tyler stated that he had seen there was a village in Surrey that had signs stating how many accidents and fatalities there had been, and asked if this should be something to consider. Cllr Clegg stated that they had also seen many different signs on their travels, including smiley faces, ones that flash up the speed, etc, permanent signs and temporary removable signs, and that they all came with a cost. Plus, there were security issues with permanent signs, and logistical issues with the temporary ones. Cllr Wood stated that it's actually quite easy not to recognise if you are speeding, and the temporary speed signs could actually be quite helpful. Cllr Clegg stated that it was

surprising in that some people actually speed up when they see the Community Speedwatch team.

- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – Cllr Wood advised that the hall was ticking along quite well, and that the scheduled meeting for the following week had been postponed as some fact finding was needed. One of the regular groups ended her contract early as they were simply not being enough attendees.
- e) **Neighbourhood Plan Report** – As agreed at the June Neighbourhood Plan Committee meeting, a review has been undertaken by the Councils consultant to assess the current draft Neighbourhood Plan policies against the Local Plan and Government Policy. It was agreed that a meeting date be set for a Thursday evening for the next committee meeting for members to consider the review and agree a way forward.
- g) **Highways Report** – Councillors **NOTED** the latest report that had been distributed by email. It was noted that the potholes in Bassett Gardens had now been filled.

C23.066 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Members **APPROVED** the list of Cheques & Monthly Statement of Accounts up 31st August 2023, which had been circulated prior to the meeting to Councillors via email.

C23.067 STEWARDSHIP – THORNWOOD COMMON – ROSARIO SITE

The Clerk advised that both she and Responsible Financial officer met with the site owners – Weston Homes – in relation to the possible stewardship of the former site known as Rosario, following which the Clerk had submitted a number of queries and questions to Weston Homes to answer. It was noted that these comments refer only to the stewardship and not to any planning applications. The Clerk read out for Councillors a list of the possible pro's and con's of stewardship, after which Cllr Clegg **PROPOSED** that the Parish Council should not consider taking on the stewardship of the site, due to the cost and concerns over flooding. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Etherington, and subsequently agreed by way of unanimous vote.

C23.068 DEFIBRILLATOR

Members were reminded that the defibrillator situated at the Methodist Church must be moved very shortly as the church is being placed for sale by auction. The two sites that have been previously assessed are not suitable for a number of reasons, and as such the Clerk has re-contacted North Weald Village Hall to see if they would be willing to site the equipment on the outside wall of the hall. A letter has been formally sent to their committee and a response is awaited. The Clerk had also contacted North Weald airfield museum, as that is another site that could be used, and a positive response has been received from them, and the defibrillator could be sited there. Cllr Tyler advised that he felt the Museum was a good option. The Chairman explained that the village hall was more central and that ideally the defibrillator should be sited where there is the most footfall. Both sites had their own issues, however it is better to have a defibrillator somewhere rather than not at all. It was **AGREED** to wait until the village hall committee had considered this matter, and if they were not in agreement to then consider the museum as the next option.

C23.069 TOUR OF BRITAIN CYCLE RIDE

Councillors noted that the Tour of Britain sporting event would be coming through North Weald and Thornwood on 8th September, and that as a result of the crowds that line each day's route a

rolling road closure will be enforced on each of the stages. This means that roads on and around the race route will be closed for a short period in which it takes the race to pass by – usually for approximately 15 to 20 minutes before the lead riders arrive. The Clerk advised on timings.

C23.070 DATES FOR DIARY

Councillors **NOTED** the following diary dates:

- BATTLE OF BRITAIN SUNDAY – 17TH SEPTEMBER @ 3PM CROSS OF SACRIFICE
- OCTOBER PC MEETING – MONDAY 2ND OCTOBER
- NOVEMBER PC MEETING – MONDAY 6TH NOVEMBER
- REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – 12TH NOVEMBER – 12-15pm DEBT OF HONOUR/NORWEGIAN MEMORIAL
- DECEMBER 4TH FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSE & BUDGET MEETING
- 8TH JANUARY 2024 PC MEETING TO APPROVE THE BUDGET ONLY
- PLANNING MEETING DATES TO BE CONFIRMED

C23.071 CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

Councillors **NOTED** that the office will close at 12pm on Wednesday 20th December 2023, and will reopen to the public at 9.15am on Wednesday 3rd January 2024. Councillors noted that Clerks mobile phone will be available at all times during this period for emergencies and cemetery purposes. Details will be posted on the notice boards and social media. All staff take a certain number of days annual leave during this time.

C23.072 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

The public and press were 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.

C23.073 NORTH WEALD METHODIST CHURCH

Councillors **NOTED** the contents of the Clerk's report included within the Agenda.

C23.074 NORTH WEALD RADIO STATION BOWLS CLUB

Councillors **NOTED** the contents of the Clerk's report included within the Agenda.

C23.075 GOING FORWARD PREMISES FOR PARISH COUNCIL OFFICES

Councillors **NOTED** the contents of the Clerk's report included within the Agenda. Cllr Mrs Jackman **PROPOSED** that the Parish Council should not move forward with the ECC suggest lease agreement of the Library, by virtue of the fact that that negotiations had broken down and that the suggested lease did not provide a conducive environment for the Parish Council to adequately work or serve the community. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Clegg. A vote was taken, the result of which was unanimous.

Meeting closed: 9.12pm

Signed

Date