



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 2nd December 2024

Time: 7.30PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (11) Cllr Buckley (Chairman), Cllr Spearman, Cllr Irvine, Cllr Blanks, Cllr Clegg, Cllr Mrs Jackman, Cllr Kinnear, Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Mrs Etherington, Cllr Stroud, Cllr Born

Officers in Attendance (1)

Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Office (meeting Clerk)

Members of the Public (2) – inc PC Cook

Members of the Press (1)

C24.132 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (3)

Apologies from Cllrs Bedford, Irvine and Tyler.

C24.133 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

None.

C24.134 MINUTES

Subject to one grammatical change on item C24.118 advised by Cllr Hawkins, Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 4th November 2024.

C24.135 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Spearman declared an interest in the Local Plan.

C24.136 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed the members of public present, and invited PC Cook to provide an update. PC Cook advised that he had obtained the crime statistics for the period from 7th October to today's date, and there was not too much to report. There had been one theft of motor vehicle from Beaufort Close with two people having been arrested and charged, theft of a car from Blenheim Way, interference with a vehicle in Tempest Mead by way of a scanner, theft of a car from the High Road, one racially aggravated crime, one criminal damage, and some number plates stolen from North Weald Market. Cllr Born asked if there were any reports regarding fraud or false callers in addition to the physical crimes that are reported. PC cook stated that these are recorded, however most fraud issues go directly to Action Fraud. If there was a robbery then the Fraud team would let him know, and most such crimes are dealt with by CID. Cllr Spearman advised he was aware there had been a theft of plant machinery from the Rosario site, to which PC Cook stated that he was not aware of this but would look into it and report back at the next meeting.

C24.137 REPORT OF THE CLERK

The Clerk provided the following reports:

- a) Remembrance Sunday – covered in agenda
- b) Various planning matters, specifically relating to changes regarding how EFDC operate their planning system, and regarding 162 High Road, North Weald

- c) Clerk had completed a home visit to a lady wishing to purchase a cemetery plot, with the lady being extremely grateful and suggesting the Parish Council should offer this service to everybody in the community.
- d) Clerk and PFO will be travelling to Bath delivering files for the Internal Audit. There will be one further visit in May, however the Office Staff are looking for a new auditor following retirement of the Councils current auditor.
- e) Councillors were reminded of their invitation to attend the Hastingwood Village Hall Christmas Tea on Sunday 8th December between 3 and 5pm.

C24.138 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman reminded Councillors that he had recently met with Cllr Chris Whitebread at the Councillors Surgery, and there had been some headway in some of the items he had raised. Cllr Whitbread had made arrangements to cut back the excessive foliage overgrowth between Blackhorse Lane and the Talbot roundabout, with the pavement now being widened as a result. The same had occurred for Vicarage Lane West after St Andrews School advised that the overgrowth was causing an issue for the children when walking to the church. There is still some more to do, but progress had been made. Two of the railings had been replaced outside the Chemist in North Weald, however originally there were three so this still needs to be looked at. The Chairman stated that he has seen progress as a result of the matters he raised at the surgery, and suggested Councillors should book a session if they have local matters that need actioning.
- b) **Vice Chairman's Report** – Cllr Hawkins advised that Cllr Spearman and his wife had planted the new plants in the planter at the entrance to the Thornwood Common Parish Hall, and that the Christmas decorations had been erected in the main hall.
- c) **District & County Councillors Reports** – None
- d) **Parish Councillors Reports** – Councillors noted the written report submitted by Cllr Tyler.
- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – No report.
- f) **Highways** – The Chairman advised he had enquired as to if the new black coating on the pavements in North Weald was an undercoat or top coat, and he confirmed it was a final top coat made up of tar and rubber. It is a special non slip material. There had been some disgruntled residents, but it didn't seem to be an issue at present. Cllr Etherington stated that whilst it did look smooth, the top coat was simply an overcoat and there will still bumps and lumps, so the pavement still wasn't straight.

C24.139 FINANCIAL REPORTS

- a) Councillors **AGREED** the monthly cheque lists for November 2024 which had been emailed to Councillors, and noted the bank balances as at 30th November 2024.
- b) Members noted that the CCLA investment report had not been received at this time.

C24.140 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY COMMERMORATIVE EVENTS 2024

Members were advised that a very successful commemorative event took place on the 10th November, with in excess of 250 people in attendance at the Norwegian Stone / Debt of Honour at Hurricane Way. This was measured by the fact that 250 programmes were printed, none were leftover, so all were handed out, and many were shared between two. Thirty three wreath Layers were in attendance. A comment was made that our service did not follow the same lines as the Royal British Legion Service, but this has

been investigated, and as the Service is not held on the 11th hour on the 11th Day of the 11th Month and is what is classed as a Community Service, it only has to follow the ‘same broad lines’ as that organised by the Royal British Legion. The Service that the Parish Council hold at the Debt of Honour has been more or less exactly the same since 1995, as has previously been reported to Council.

In attendance were the Deputy Lieutenant of Essex, Rosemary Padfield, two representatives from the Royal Norwegian Airforce who flew in specially to attend this event, and members of 56 Squadron. There were 67 people at the lunch, however despite intensive advertising there was not the uptake from residents that this council had hoped for. A number of the tables had been made up from guests of Councillors, or Guests of the Parish Council. Advertising of the event had started in July, and was also placed on Notice Boards, Social Media and in the Village Life Magazine. Overall, the event was once again very successful, with commendation going to Essex Police for keeping the traffic at bay for a short while during the commemorations, Cllr Andy Tyler for reading out the list of Wreath Layers, North Weald Airfield Museum for the help with the electric and lectern, and Cllr Nigel Bedford, ‘saving the day’ with an electrical adaptor, when the plug to the speaker connection broke on the morning of the event, despite the system being fully checked and operational less than 48 hours before.

Thankyou letters have been sent to all involved, and we are looking forward to a successful event next year. It should be noted that a number of people at the lunch asked if the Parish Council was undertaking anything for VE DAY80 in 2025. The Chairman advised that it was likely that this would be the last visit by 56 Squadron.

C24.141 QUAD BIKE DAMAGE

Councillors noted that the Parish Council had been advised that a person on a Quad Bike had been accessing Weald Common and the football Pitches at Memorial Playing Fields on a Quad Bike and causing some damage. The area of concern at Weald Common seems mainly to be on Peer Group Land, but the area at the Memorial Playing Field is concerning as it is clearly damaging the football facilities. It is understood that the Queens Hall Charity have put some wooden barriers in place to try and stop this happening again. Cllr Ms Wood provided an update, stating that when she received the phone call she had reported this directly to the police. The person who uses this quad bike parks along Queens Road at Cyril Hawkins Close, and cuts across the fields. Cllr Ms Wood stated that she would be checking with the contractor if the wooden barriers had been installed. The Chairman asked if signage had been erected where the posts were, to which Cllr Ms Wood advised that there was already a sign up saying no motorised vehicles, but this was seemingly being totally ignored. Cllr Stroud stated that the football pitch at Weald Common had been churned up, and that he would keep an eye on it.

C24.142 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillors noted that the work regarding progressing the Neighbourhood Plan was underway. This included an application for grant funding having been made of £5,969.92 via Locality, work to create a dedicated section on the PC website, a project timeline, and liaison with the consultant. Councillors considered the following matters:

1. Attached to the agenda was a document outlining the broad costs to employ a consultant to support the work to get the Neighbourhood Plan to referendum. Cllr Born asked what Google’s role was within the Neighbourhood Plan, to which the meeting clerk advised that Google had no role in terms of its creation, and that EFDC had sold the land on the Airfield to Google and held the proceeds from that sale, and that they can only use that money for capital expenditure. A Neighbourhood Plan is a community project. Cllr Born advised that he was very angry about the Neighbourhood Plan, but that he would keep quiet about it. Cllr Clegg asked Cllr Born to elaborate, stating that perhaps this Council could answer any of his questions or concerns, however Cllr Born stated he would reserve his position. Cllr Clegg **PROPOSED** the consultant

be employed on these terms. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Etherington. A vote was taken, the result of which was as follows:

10- For

1 – Against

2. Councillors reviewed the recommendation of the Personnel Committee to employ a temporary administrative staff member to take on some of the administrative functions for a fixed term period of 1 year to allow the PFO to focus the necessary time on progressing the Neighbourhood plan. The associated costs will be included in the budget/precept meeting on 16th December. Attached to the agenda were the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting, which Councillors were reminded were on a Pink, and as such are confidential. Cllr Clegg advised that at the Personnel Committee meeting the prior week, a detailed in-depth discussion took place regarding this matter, and he **PROPOSED** the recommendations by the Personnel Committee be ratified. This was **SECONDED** by Cllr Hawkins. A vote was taken, the result of which was as follows:

10 – For

0 – Against

1 - Abstention

C24.143 EFDC LOCAL COUNCIL LIAISON MEETING (LCLC)

As reported at the November Parish Council meeting, a number of questions had been put to the EFDC LCLC committee held on 21st November 2024 with regard to improving communication between Parish and Town Councils and EFDC, along with updates to the planning system. Councillors are able to view the webcast of this meeting using the following link - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgXpZ_KhXE&list=PLG6IsqvS9wq2SgdjwHOqak5ZMW-mA6E_L&index=1. The meeting clerk provided a brief update on the meeting. It was noted that it is expected a new organisation entitled the Epping Forest Association of Local Councils will be set up in the near future, along with an Epping Forest Clerks Network.

C24.144 BUDGET / PRECEPT MEETING

This years Budget and Precept meeting will take place on Monday 16th December. Councillors were asked to advise the Clerk if they would like any matter included for consideration under the budget / precept, and if so to provide full details of the subject including costings. So far, the PFO has a list of items agreed throughout the year, and the Clerk has items from the Hastingwood Councillors, and Cllr Buckley provided two items for VE Day Commemorations and the Air Ambulance. Items for inclusion are needed at least two full weeks prior to this meeting. Cllr Stroud asked if the use of the Bowls Club could be included, with the suggestion that it could possibly be used for the Scouts group.

C14.145 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT 2024/2025

Councillors noted that this years Interim Internal Audit will take place on 4th and 5th December, and will be conducted remotely, as detailed earlier in the meeting.

C24.146 MEETING WITH CHAIRMAN OF QUALIS

The Clerk and the PFO met with Jen Gould and Cllr Chris Whitbread on Friday 8th November. This meeting was as a result of a previous meeting called by Simon Rutter (previously employed by Qualis) to discuss North Weald Airfield. Cllr Chris Whitbread and Jen Gould advised that Simon had now left Qualis's employment. Cllr Whitbread wanted to emphasise that North Weald Airfield did not fall under the auspices or control of Qualis, and its management and control remains under Epping Forest District Council. At the meeting the Clerk spoke about this councils concern in relation to a recent planning application, and Cllr Whitbread advised that he would take on board the views of this council and would

attend the next meeting of the council to speak to Parish Councillors, whether it be a planning meeting or a meeting of the council, to listen to the councils concerns. Cllr Blanks stated that technically this was correct, but that EFDC actually own Qualis, and this was just a way for them not to have to answer questions about the organisation.

C24.147 CONSULTATION ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND PROXY VOTING

Councillors noted that the Government is currently consulting on possible changes to legislation to allow remote attendance at meetings of Parish Councils in certain circumstances, as well as proxy voting. The deadline for responses is 19th December. Councillors were reminded they are also able to respond individually. Councillors discussed this matter, with differing views, however it was **AGREED** that the meeting Clerk respond to the consultation stating this Council did not support proxy voting, however they would support the option of holding meetings remotely. It was noted that if this legislation came into effect, it would be up to the Parish Council themselves to set their own policy on if, how or when it would allow remote meetings.

C24.148 CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR CLOSURE

Members noted that the Parish Council Office will close at 12 noon on Friday 20th December 2024 and re-open 9.15am on Monday 6th January 2025. Staff will be taking any appropriate annual leave on necessary days. The Clerk will provide emergency cover during the Christmas and New Year closure, and the office mobile phone will be on to cover Emergency and Cemetery Matters. Notices will be placed on Noticeboards and information on Social media. There will be a short Parish Council meeting on the evening of the 6th January 2025 to ratify the Precept.

C24.149 NORTH WEALD MARKET TRAFFIC

Councillors noted that following the recent introduction of specific road closures on market days, the Clerk was still awaiting a response from the market operator. The Chairman advised that it was seemingly a disaster, with the two peak times (morning / lunch) still creating huge problems for the village. It was noted that this wasn't just affecting North Weald, but also Thornwood and Hastingwood, as people were using both Thornwood and Hastingwood as alternative routes. There was horrific queuing on the M11 roundabout, and the changes that have been put in place seem to have made this worse. Cllr Etherington stated that it is not only disruptive, but dangerous, and suggested Gary Saunders visit the area to see the issues. Cllr Ms Wood stated that all that has been done is to close Church Lane, and suggested the market operator should be invited to the Parish Council to explain the rationale behind the changes. It was noted that not only was there a lot of discord on social media about the problem, but that social media was also being used to encourage people to attend the market. It was **AGREED** that the Market operator should be chased for a response, and invited to meet with the Parish Council.

C24.150 CHRISTMAS TREE, NORTH WEALD

It was noted that the Christmas Tree in North Weald had now been planted next to the flag pole, and that the lights will be switched on early December. Two small trees will be put in the garden at the front of the shops with associated lighting.

Meeting closed:

Signed

Date