



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 1st July 2024

Time: 7.30PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (8) A Buckley (Chairman), Mrs S Hawkins, B Clegg, Mrs S Jackman MBE,
N Born, R Spearman, Cllr Etherington, Cllr Blanks

** for part of meeting*

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan Deluca - Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

Members of the Public (3) – inc EFDC Cllr Burrows, plus two members of the public

Members of the Press (1)

C24.049 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (4)

Apologies from Cllrs Wood, Kinnear, Bedford and Tyler.

C24.050 OTHER ABSENCES (2)

Cllr Stroud and Cllr Irving.

C24.051 MINUTES

Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 10th June 2024.

C24.052 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Spearman declared an interest in the Local Plan.

C24.053 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed members of the public present. Cllr Burrows provided a brief update on the EFDC Lottery which was going live on 2nd July, advising there were presently 26 organisations / people that had signed up to it.

The Chairman provided a brief update on an issue at Wheelers Farm Gardens allotments pertaining to permission that was given to a plot holder to place a shed at the end of their plot, however a neighbouring resident had complained regarding this. This resident was in the public gallery, and the Chairman invited her to address the Council. The resident explained that she had lived in the property for 3 years, and was very opposed to the very large shed that been erected and backed on to her boundary. She advised that she was previously on very good terms with the tenants, who advised they would be erecting a shed the same size as their previous one, however this shed is much bigger and taking over the whole of her back garden, affecting her light, privacy and view. The resident stated that she had been told there were no height restrictions within the terms of tenancy for the North Weald Allotment which she found hard to believe, after having completed some research with other allotments in the area. She advised that these allotments back onto people's homes, boundaries and spaces, and that everybody needed to be respectful of this fact. The resident stated that she knew she had now lost her view and sunlight into her garden, and that all she was simply asking for was the direction of the shed to be switched.

The Clerk advised that she had spoken to the Portfolio Holder for housing at EFDC, and suggested the best way forward would be for the resident to speak with EFDC as they were her landlord. The Clerk also provided a brief reminder of the history of these allotments and the new properties at Cyril Hawkins Close, stating that at the time they were built the Parish Council had raised the potential future issue of conflicts if EFDC did not erect some form of boundary fencing or hedging. The PFO advised that after having reviewed the planning permission for the properties, there was a landscaping condition which stated that hedging would be planted along the rear of the properties which abut the allotments, the location of which would be agreed after discussion with Secured by Design, however she was unsure if this had happened given the condition had been discharged but now hedging planted. Cllr Etherington stated that EFDC should be held to account if they hadn't completed this, further stating that the allotments belong to the Parish Council and what goes on there is up to the Parish Council to agree. It was noted there were other sheds on the allotment site that were not dissimilar to the one being erected, and that at present only the roof was left to go on. The shed was expected to be around 8ft at its highest point, and the rear of the shed would be facing the residents garden.

The resident explained that she would have liked to have been at the site meeting when this shed was agreed, however the Clerk explained that the Council did not routinely go to neighbouring properties inviting them for a site visit as this was a matter for the allotments. The resident stated that what was being erected was much bigger than what was needed to house some tools or equipment for an allotment, to which the Clerk advised that allotments were for leisure purposes which included a social element meaning sheds were not always simply about storing tools. The resident stated that now when she walks into her lounge, all she sees is a wooden shed, and that this has made a big difference to her. The Chairman explained that if EFDC had planted a hedgerow this would have in effect been the same, to which the resident stated a hedgerow may have been nicer. The resident explained that in order for the tenant to put the roof on their shed, they would need permission from her to cut back branches on a tree which is in her garden, however the PFO explained that such permission was not needed as the land owner had a right in law to cut back any overhanging branches up to the boundary of the property, subject to offering to return the cut branches to the landowner. The other resident in the public gallery asked what would happen when the resident wanted to water her grass and that water goes all over the shed causing damage to the shed.

The Clerk stated that permission had been given for the shed and that this would not change. The Chairman confirmed that the Clerk would provide contact details to the resident for EFDC housing.

The Chairman thanked the two residents for attending, and subsequently left the meeting.

C24.054 REPORT OF THE CLERK

The Clerk provided the following reports:

- Parish Hall – there had been a couple of issues, one of which had resulted in the hirers deposit not being returned as extra cleaning was needed. At the Parish Hall liaison meeting it had been stated that the damage deposit for all hall bookings should increase to £150.
- St Andrews Church – the Clerk had received three complaints so far this month regarding the state of the church grounds, with one lady actually visiting the parish office. Cllr Clegg asked what interest the Parish Council had in ensuring the grounds were maintained, to which the Clerk advised that the PC held a number of events by the cross of sacrifice, and if the grounds were not cleared the Council couldn't hold these events. The Chairman suggested the St Andrews school head may know who to contact. Cllr Clegg suggested contact should be made with the Diocese in Chelmsford advising of the complaints and asking them to take action.
- External Audit – all completed and sent off.

- Hastingwood village Hall AGM – Clerk had attended and they were doing very well with sufficient funds in the bank. There was a big expense coming up soon with the need to replace the floor, and the Clerk would try and assist in obtaining a grant for them.
- Clerk has been dealing with issue of streetlight in Hastingwood, at junction of Mill Lane / Hastingwood Road.

C24.055 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

- Chairman's Report** – The Chairman reminded Councillors of the tour of the airfield that took place some weeks back, stating that the Airfield Manager had agreed to arrange a tour of the Air Ambulance facility on the airfield, the Chairman suggesting 1st August 6pm. The Chairman would go back to the Airfield Manager to confirm this date. The Chairman also advised that he had written to landowner at of the shops in North Weald again regarding the state of the wall at the front entrance, however had no received a response. This was following some work that was completed on the facia of the buildings at this location.
- Vice Chairman's Report** – Cllr Mrs Hawkins advised that herself and Cllr Spearman would be conducting the next monthly allotment visit the following day.
- District & County Councillors Reports** – Cllr Bromwich had submitted a written report which was tabled for members.
- Parish Councillors Reports** – Cllr Clegg reported on Community Speedwatch, advising that the prior week on a Sunday between 10.30-11.30am 32% of vehicles were doing over 36MPH, with over half doing between 40-47MPH. The Police had also attended site without being prompted to on Thursday the prior week, and you could tell how busy they were as a local resident approached them and was told they were too busy to talk, with at least two vehicles waiting to have tickets issued. A further speed watch would take place at Skipps Corner North Weald later that week.

Cllr Clegg also advised that the 'outline' markings for the double red lines had been placed on Upland Road. The Chairman asked if there was any news about how these red lines would be enforced, to which Cllr Clegg advised he was not aware, but that he felt it would act as a good deterrent in any case.

- Queens Hall Charity Report** – No report.
- Highways** – The Chairman explained that he had liaised with the Airfield Manager to try and temporarily stop the temporary traffic signals on the A414 as a result of the Airfield and event traffic the prior weekend, however he didn't believe this had been done.

C24.056 FINANCIAL REPORTS

- Councillors **AGREED** the monthly cheque lists for June 2024, and noted the bank balances as at 30th June 2024. Members were reminded that they needed to check their Councillor emails on a regular basis, and agreed they would. There was brief discussion regarding data protection and why Councillor emails shouldn't really be on phones.
- The Clerk advised that the latest statement regarding interest from the CCLA had not been received as it was too early in the month. Cllr Blanks suggested that now would be a good time to invest further funds into the CCLA account if a fixed rate could be obtained, which the Council agreed to. The PFO would look into this.

C24.057 NORTH WEALD BUG HOUSE

Members were reminded of discussion at the last meeting regarding the possible installation of a Bug House as a feature on the newly planted Woodland on Weald Common. The Chairman reminded Councillors that he was looking at improving the central focus point of this area where the Copper Beech tree was located, and that a number of ideas had been received to make the area more pleasant. The idea was to have low maintenance items, and bug houses had been suggested to him, with the idea that these could be located by the children's area and the St Andrews Eco-Warriors could be tasked with naming the area. At the last meeting there had been some concern that if a bug house consisted of piled up old pieces of wood, this could cause an issue with the Adders that were on the Common. The Clerk advised that no further suggestions had been received. Cllr Hawkins advised that within the community garden in Thornwood she had never seen a single bug in their bug house. Cllr Etherington asked if it was really necessary, given Weald Common was a very natural environment and perhaps the bugs would be safer in their own environment. After discussion, it was **AGREED** not to move forward with the bug house idea, and to revisit in a years time.

C24.058 MEETING WITH GOOGLE

Members were advised that a meeting was held at the Parish Hall where invited representatives from EFDC, Qualis, and the Chairman and Staff Members of the Parish Council were in attendance regarding proposals for the Google acquired site on the Airfield. Councillors noted that a specific meeting for Members of the Parish Council had been organised by the Google Representatives, which will take place 7.30pm on Monday 8th July at the Parish Hall. The Clerk advised Councillors to let her know if there were any specific questions they wanted to raise, and she could pass these on to Google in the hope that an answer would be available in time for the meeting. The Chairman advised he had asked for a list of who was attending and their job titles.

Cllr Born asked why Google had chosen to have mini consultations with other parties, to which the Clerk advised this question should be asked of Google. Cllr Born advised it was a little difficult for him to understand what the interface was between the Parish Council and a major player such as Google, as it didn't matter what the Council asked as Google could defer or deflect any questions, and it's going ahead anyway. Cllr Born was advised there would be representatives from Google present at the meeting, as well as consultants, and that as a developer they were required to consult with the local community including statutory consultees, so by having these conversations Parish Councillors can advise Google of the specific matters, concerns and issues relevant to parishioners and the area so they can be considered as part of any consultation. Cllr Born stated that he had previously asked for an Environmental Impact Assessment, and was told he could not have a copy because it was too large and he wouldn't understand it. Both the Clerk and Chairman asked who had said this, however Cllr Born could not recall. The Chairman asked Cllr Born to check and advise him directly of who this was and he would follow this up.

C24.059 DEVELOPER WORKING GROUP

On 24th June the first meeting of the Developer Working Group took place, and a copy of the notes from this meeting were attached to the agenda. Included within the notes was a recommendation made by the Working Group for Council consideration regarding the upcoming Google consultation as follows:

Recommendation: Parish Council to conduct a survey using SurveyMonkey to both raise awareness about the upcoming consultation on the possible Google data centre on North Weald Airfield and establish residents views and concerns, to help inform the Parish Councils overall response to any consultation.

Councillors **AGREED** to this recommendation, noting that it would be similar to the Methodist Church consultation that was conducted via SurveyMonkey, and that this would be done via social media, Everything Epping Forest, Website, and Noticeboards.

It was noted that the next working group meeting would be held as and when needed.

C24.060 MEETING BETWEEN EFDC, MARKET OPERATOR AND CHAIRMAN OF PARISH COUNCIL

Members had previously been advised of this meeting which took place on Saturday 18th May between the above named parties to discuss the traffic problems associated with the market. The Clerk advised that the report has been created however it must first be reported to EFDC which had not yet taken place, and as such the Parish Council was still awaiting a copy.

C24.061 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY COMMERMORATIVE EVENTS 2024

Members were advised that a meeting to discuss the above had taken place earlier that day, and that the minutes were being drawn up. Full details of what was being proposed would be included within the minutes, which would be circulated, which included sticking with the current format but having a lot more publicity about the lunch. The Clerk stated that she had been advised by EFDC that it was expected there could be representation from a number of members from 56 Squadron this year.

C24.062 USE OF THE ALLOTMENT CAR PARK AT HASTINGWOOD BY HASTINGWOOD VILLAGE HALL FOR AN EVENT

The Hastingwood Village Hall Committee had asked if it would be possible to use the car park at the Hastingwood Allotment Site as overspill parking when they have their Hog Roast Event on Saturday 3rd August between 10 and 4pm. They would open and shut the gate. Councillors **AGREED** to this use, however stating that the allotment tenants would need to be advised, and that somebody from the Village Hall Committee would need to manage the parking.

C24.063 CHANGES TO PLANNING AT EFDC

Councillors noted that on 28th May 2024, EFDC Cabinet considered a report from the Planning Advisory Service regarding possible changes to how Planning will operate at EFDC and thus the rest of the district. This report was commissioned following EFDC identifying it was potentially under threat of designation under section 62B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 due to the quality of Major applications decision-making. The maximum percentage that the Government considers acceptable when it comes to Major planning decisions overturned at appeal is 10%. EFDC narrowly avoided the threat of designation with 9.8%, and as such this review will be used as part of EFDCs action plan to identify what improvements the council can put in place so that it avoids the threat of designation over the quality of decision-making in the future. It was agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 28th May to accept the recommendations (in that changes are needed) with a Council Member workshop to discuss the possible changes taking place on 19th June, after which it goes to the Constitution Working Group to finalise the details, with a full report and recommendations going to EFDC Full Council meeting on 8th August. The relevant links were included within the main body of the agenda for Councillors information.

EFDC Cllr Burrows advised that the current suggestion was that there would be two committees, and that Ward Councillors who sit on the committee would not be permitted to vote on any applications in their ward, but that they would be permitted to speak and comment on the application. He further advised that good quality planning officers were hard to both find and keep given the lure of London and higher

salaries. The Clerk confirmed she had been in contact with Cllr Bedford regarding these changes. A further update would be provided once EFDC had made a decision.

C24.064 FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Each year the Parish Council should assess the risks it faces from a financial perspective and consider if any actions are needed. Attached to the agenda was a copy of an updated Financial Risk Assessment completed in June, which included the following recommendations:

- Recommend all staff provide the Clerk with an up to date list of their passwords for all relevant computer programmes.
- Recommend New NALC Financial Regulations model to be reviewed in 2024.
- Recommend add another signatory on to the accounts (there are currently 3)
- Recommend consideration given to creating 'idiots guide' where time permits.

Councillors **AGREED** the actions as included within the Risk Assessment.

C24.065 CCTV

Councillors noted that a council must have a clear legal basis for the use of CCTV, and must take into account the nature of the problem they are seeking to address, whether a surveillance system is a justified and an effective solution, whether a better solutions exist, what effect its use may have on individuals, and whether in the light of this its use is a proportionate response to the problem. The fact that having CCTV is possible, affordable or has public support should not be the justification for processing personal data. Because this council already has CCTV in place, it must regularly evaluate whether it is necessary and proportionate to continue using it. The Council is required to conduct a review of the system's effectiveness to ensure that it is still doing what it was intended to do. If it does not achieve its purpose, it should be stopped or modified. For example:

- Is it addressing the needs and delivering the benefits that justified its use?
- Is information available to help deal with queries about the operation of the system and how individuals may make access requests?

The current Parish Council CCTV in use was at Thornwood Common Parish Hall, Weald Common, and outside the shops in North Weald.

Whilst Councillors agreed the continued use of CCTV at both Thornwood Parish Hall and Weald Common was justified and should continue, the Chairman raised concern about the effectiveness of the CCTV at the shops, given that the Parish Council did not have access to the CCTV, and it was always a challenge to obtain CCTV when a request was passed to EFDC who currently monitor it. The Chairman advised there had been endless damage to the wall at the shops, kids mucking about, and when CCTV was requested the Parish Council needs to identify a 1 hour window, which in most cases it was unable to do. If the Parish Council had access to this CCTV, the designated data processor at the council could spend more time finding out information when necessary. The cost for EFDC to monitor the CCTV was around £350 a year. The PFO had checked the contract, and there was a 6 month termination clause included. The Chairman stated that because of this lack of being able to use the CCTV to track down law breakers, he was not confident that the CCTV was having the desired effect, nor was it acting as a deterrent. Cllr Blanks advised that if it wasn't doing its job, then there was no point paying for it and the 6 months notice should be given. Cllr Clegg and Cllr Hawkins agreed with this.

Cllr Born asked if the CCTV was used following a recent robbery at the Co-op, however this information was not known. A vote was taken as to whether or not the 6-months notice should be given to EFDC, the results of which were as follows:

5 – FOR

2- AGAINST

The PFO advised that the Service Level Agreement suggested that the Parish Council owned the CCTV outside the shops. It was **AGREED** to hold off on any action until this had been clarified.

Meeting closed 9.07pm:

Signed

Date