



MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL

Date: 9th November 2021

Time: 7.00PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (10) A Buckley (Chairman), Mrs A Grigg, T Blanks, B Clegg, R Spearman
Mrs S Jackman MBE, A Tyler, A Irvine, Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Ms Wood

** For part of meeting*

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan Deluca - Clerk
Adriana Jones – Principal Financial Officer

Members of the Public (1) – Doreen Lodge*

Members of the Press (1)

Shortly before the meeting the Chairman asked Councillors to take a moment in recognition of Sir David Amess MP who was recently brutally murdered in the course of his selfless duty as a Member of Parliament, and how all who give up their time to serve their communities should be able to do so without fear for their own safety. This was echoed by all present.

C21.092 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (4)

Apologies received from Cllrs Mrs Etherington, Mulliner, Bedford and Stroud.

C21.093 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

None

C21.094 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 4th October 2021 were **AGREED**.

C21.095 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs Grigg, Blanks and Buckley declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 11 by virtue of being members of the Royal British Legion. Cllr Spearman declared a pecuniary interest in any item concerning the Local Plan.

C21.096 NOTICE OF VACANCY

Members **NOTED** that due to the resignation of Cllr Ms Carmela Coop Rodia a vacancy had occurred in the Hastingwood Ward. The vacancy was reported to EFDC Elections Office and the relevant Notice of Vacancy had been posted. It is understood that no request for an Election has been made, and as such the Council will be able to co-opt at the next full meeting of Council.

C21.097 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Doreen Lodge to meeting and invited her to address the Council, advising Councillors that this may also be relevant to point 14 on the agenda which will be discussed at the Environmental Committee meeting the following week. Mrs Lodge advised that she was present as a representative of the North Weald Preservation Society and that sadly this group would be closing at the end of the year due to a lack of volunteers wanting to serve. As

such, there would be a pot of funds left over, most of which would be going to the CPRE in accordance with the constitution, however the committee had decided they would like some of these funds to go towards North Weald village, and a suggestion had been made to provide two small benches / seats on Weald Common. Mrs Lodge advised she was aware that Countrycare had done something similar in the past, however due to a lack of consultation this had resulted in the seats being moved. Mrs Lodge confirmed she had received costings for said benches (which would in effect be more of a plank of wood type of bench), and was looking for agreement and permission from the Parish Council to place these benches on Weald Common. Nearer the time, Mrs Lodge and Cllr Grigg would visit site to pick a suitable area. The Chairman advised that he felt this was a superb idea which he fully supported, and offered the thanks of the Parish Council to the Preservation Society for this kind donation and idea. Cllrs Blanks and Tyler confirmed the same.

Mrs Lodge asked what had happened to the small bench near the play area on Weald Common as she had noticed it was no longer in situ, to which the Chairman advised that it had been removed following clearance of the overgrowth near to and around the bench when at which time it had been noticed that the base of the bench was rotten. It was removed for reason of health and safety. It was not clear at this stage if it would be replaced. The Chairman advised that there had also been a number of anti-social behaviour issues in this location which seemed to have abated at this time.

Councillors **AGREED** permission would be given to the placing of two benches on Weald Common, location to be agreed, and thanked the Preservation Society for this kind offer.
[Mrs Lodge left the meeting].

C21.098 REPORT OF THE CLERK

Councillors **NOTED** the report of the Clerk as detailed in the agenda which included in addition to general updates the following:

- The Principal Finance Officer has attended a number of workshops on Climate Change and Safer Roads.
- The Clerk and the Senior Admin Officer have attended a Cemetery Course on Gardens of Remembrance.
- The Senior Admin Officer has attended a course on the Woodland Trust and Free Tree Scheme, and Community Police Officers. The Clerk had made two Grant applications – 1 for ECC Councillors Locality Fund – 1 for RCCE Safer Buildings (£11,000) - both grants being for The Thornwood Parish Hall – Advised response should be received for the RCCE grant by the end of this week.
- The Annual Allotment meeting and Citizen of the Year awards are expected to be organised to be held before the end of March 2022.
- Agreed to provide HWVH donation of £50 towards their community afternoon tea.
- Agreed to provide donation of £50 towards any Christmas tree lighting / carol event in Thornwood, however Cllr Hawkins advised that it had not been confirmed this was going ahead yet. Cllr Hawkins advised she would chase this.
- Vacancy for Caretaker as current Caretaker is retiring. Job Advert has been placed with Everything Epping Forest and North Weald Village life with 6 applications having been received within a few hours of posting.

C21.099 REPORTS & MEMBERS REPORTS

- a) **Chairman's Report** – The Chairman provided members with an update on Cllr Mulliners Progress. All Councillors wished him well. Cllr Tyler confirmed he would arrange for a card to be signed at

the Environmental Committee meeting the following week. The Chairman reported that himself, the Clerk and PFO had attended a memorial service for former Vice Chairman and Councillor Brian Eldridge. It was a lovely service, supported by his large family and friends, and was held at this time due to the restrictions of COVID during 2020 – the year Cllr Eldridge passed away. By way of an explanation, the Clerk advised that this was an invitation only event at the request of the family, stating that she was aware some Councillors would have liked to have attended.

The Chairman reminded Councillors of the list of Highway Actions that had been created by this Council around 18-24 months ago which the Clerk and himself had been pushing with Cllr Whitbread and the Local Highway Panel, and was pleased to report that nearly the entire length of the High Road through North Weald (with the exception outside the shops) had now been fully resurfaced. Many of the items of the list were now completed, however this will be refreshed as and when necessary as new issues arise.

The Chairman reported that both he and the Senior Administrative Officer has met with John Moat, ECC Forestry and Woodland Officer, however a full report would be made at the Environmental Committee meeting the following week.

The Chairman thanked Councillors who had donated to the Norway House Christmas Party, and advised he would liaise with those Councillors who were missing in the coming weeks. He reminded Councillors they were invited to attend the event which was being held on 2nd December.

The Chairman reported that the Clerk had been liaising with ECC Elections Office regarding redacting the address details of all Councillors, and it had been agreed these could be redacted. This would be dealt with in the coming days.

b) Vice Chairman's Report - The Vice Chairman reminded Councillors that at the last meeting it was agreed she would ascertain if the preservation society would continue with the maintenance of the flower box by the village sign in North Weald, and confirmed that after speaking with Mrs Lawrence it was indeed their intention to do so. It was also confirmed that £150 of the funds from the Preservation Society would be kept behind for this work. The Vice Chairman advised that the summer plants were cleared recently, and the winter planting would be taking place soon. The Chairman advised that some rot was noticed on the inside of the box, and that he had arranged for the box to have another coat of paint and preservation treatment in order to try and increase the lifespan of the box.

c) District & County Councillors Reports – No Reports.

d) Parish Councillors Reports - Cllr Grigg asked that thanks be formally recorded for the current Caretakers – Sue and Peter Hebden – for the outstanding job they have both done for so many years. This was echoed by Councillors. The Clerk would arrange an appropriate thank you.

Cllr Irvine had submitted a written report, in which he advised that following Cllr Morgan's statement that as was well in Thornwood he had written a report of the current issues and activities for Cllr Morgan's information. Cllr Irvines report also included information concerning a meeting with NEPP, attendance at a Vision Zero online workshop organised by SERP, and confirmation that the Inland Border Facility HGV sign had been moved to the other side of Hastingwood Road.

The Chairman stated that the damage caused by the HGV going up Mill Street had still not been fixed, with a 2-foot ditch having now been created. Cllr Irvine confirmed he was aware of this damage, and damage to the Common, however was unsure as to to whom he needed to report this. It was **AGREED** the Clerk would provide him with a contact at Harlow Council.

Cllr Clegg apologised for not having time to submit a written report, however advised that earlier in the day at 11am himself and two Thornwood Residents conducted Community Speedwatch in Upland Road, Thornwood, in support of ‘Surround a Town’ taking place in Epping. There was a total of 69 vehicles recorded, with 25% doing more than 36MPH. It was their intention to go out again at 7.15am Thursday morning.

- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – Cllr Wood advised that the hall was almost fully booked Monday to Friday, and new bookings have already started for next year. Cllr Wood confirmed she has applied for a grant of £12,000 from the RCCE fund on behalf of the hall to make things easier and more secure in terms of instilling confidence during COVID. The only issue at present is the positive legionella testing, which although not life threatening and not something at this stage that public health need to be made aware of, is an issue that needs resolving. Regular tests are being completed, but with the number of dead legs in the plumbing system it will be a difficult issue to resolve. Although Cllr Wood confirmed a plumber had already visited site, Cllr Tyler advised he would be happy for somebody to come out and have a look at the system for her.
- f) **Neighbourhood Plan Report** – the PFO advised that in July EFDC provided feedback on the draft Neighbourhood Plan, some of which was quite frustrating. The Steering Group had met and reviewed the feedback, and the group proposed that the Neighbourhood Plan be put on hold until such time as the Local Plan has been adopted, as progressing before this time could be very time consuming and costly, and the work undertaken could ultimately be not an effective good use of time. Councillors **NOTED** this.
- g) **EFDC Local Plan Report** – No formal update, but the examiners report was expected by the end of the year.
- h) **Highways Report** – None

C21.100 FINANCIAL REPORT

a) List of Cheque & Monthly Statement of Accounts

Members **APPROVED** the list of payments made up to 31st October 2021 (circulated prior to the meeting) and **NOTED** the account balances at the end of the month. The PFO reminded Councillors that the first meeting in December would be the budget and precept meeting and that if Councillors wanted any items added to the agenda, they would need to let the Clerk know within the next two weeks.

- b) **Internal Audit** - Members **NOTED** that the Internal Auditor would be in attendance on Friday, 12th November to carry out the Interim Internal Audit.

C21.101 BUILDING BACK BETTER – POSSIBLE MOVE BACK INTO THE LIBRARY

Members were reminded that the Clerk is continuing in conversations with County and District Councillor Christopher Whitbread regarding a possible move back into the Library. The Clerk has advised the relevant parties that this council would be available to move back in subject to the relevant SLA and agreements being in place, and that this Council would welcome a move as soon as possible. The Clerk has had a couple of conversations with Cllr Whitbread the week

commencing 25th October as it is understood that Harlow Library and the Area Registrar will be in situ in North Weald Library until early Spring 2022. So any move would not be expected until after that date.

As an interim measure, the Clerk had been liaising with Cllr Whitbread about the Council having some presence in North Weald, and the possibility of having an Open Morning for residents on one Saturday per month (regular date each month) in the Library. The Clerk would also be in attendance. Councillors were asked if they would be willing to attend (perhaps 2 each Surgery) between now and April until hopefully this Council could be back in the Library. Cllrs Mrs Hawkins, Tyler, Buckley and Mrs Grigg confirmed they would be willing to attend. The Clerk suggested timings of 10am to 11.30am. It was **NOTED** that Cllr Whitbread would make the arrangements for this, and that the Clerk would establish if this was in the public area or the office. Cllr Mrs Grigg advised that she used to offer Councillor surgeries some time ago once a month, but take up was not particularly good, however all you can do is offer the opportunity.

As the numbers of residents attending the Parish Council Face to Face Administration Centre continues to be quite low, it is suggested that it would better to be open to the public on a Monday and Friday only between 9.15am and 12noon. The staff will work from home on the Wednesday unless they need to go into the office for administration purposes. Obviously if this Council can get the support to hold the monthly Saturday Surgeries in North Weald Library, this should boost visitor numbers thus being of greater assistance to residents.

C21.102 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY EVENTS 2021

Councillors **NOTED** that all plans were in hand for the Remembrance Sunday Events, this year the date being Sunday 14th November 2021. The Bugler has been confirmed for the Debt of Honour/Norwegian Stone, and the Vicar has confirmed verbally with a further email sent to him asking for his formal written response. All invitations have now been sent out. There is a total of 36 wreath layers, however a response was still awaited from Norway which wasn't that unusual as often a response is received days before the event. Cllrs Mrs Grigg and Mrs Jackman would be laying wreaths on behalf of a number of organisations who cannot attend. There were 67 attendees for the luncheon. This years centrepieces would feature what would be happening with the memorials next year.

The Royal British Legion were sent a number of emails regarding the organising of the Service at the Parish War Memorial in St Andrew's Church and they have confirmed that no assistance is needed from the Parish Council. However as a belt and braces exercise the Clerk attended a meeting of the Royal British Legion North Weald Branch RBL (NWB) to confirm whether or not they needed any assistance with any of the printing for hymn sheets or programmes or the cleaning of the Parish Memorial, or indeed any other items that the Parish Council had usually carried out up until 2019 in preparation for the Royal British Legion service at the Parish War Memorial. The Clerk was informed at that meeting by the RBL Chairman that no help was needed, and everything was 'in hand and they were fully prepared'. The Chairman of RBL (NWB) asked if any assistance was needed from the RBL (NWB) by the Parish Council at the Service at the Airfield Memorial. The Clerk advised that this was also 'all in hand' and everything was prepared and ready to go. This was commented on by the Chairman and also by the minute taker that they could not understand why there was no input from the RBL in the Parish Council Service and they felt it should include the RBL. The Clerk respectfully reminded the Chairman that she had previously explained the origins of the Service, which had originated at the Norwegian Stone, and that this was a service of 'Thanksgiving & Remembrance' by the

Parish Council. This service was always held at 12.15pm so it did not clash with the Royal British Legions 'Service of Remembrance' at the Parish Memorial.

The Clerk also explained that there were councillors who were members of the RBL (NWB) who would be in attendance and who could read the passages from the programme so there would be representation. The Chairman and the minute taker still seemed unhappy with this explanation. The Clerk further advised that she does not make these types of decisions, therefore she would place a full report of this conversation and matter on the November Council Agenda for Members discussion and decision and would then advise the Chairman of the RBL (NWB) of the outcome.

The minute taker advised that he felt that using the RBL Poppy on the Parish Council Service Sheet was breaching Copyright. The Clerk advised that she would also report this concern to Members. Cllr Clegg questioned the truth of this, however the Clerk advised that as a precautionary measure we would now be using our own photograph so this was not an issue. The Standard Bearer who was present at the RBL meeting advised that she had not been formally asked to attend the Debt of Honour service. The Clerk advised that a Standard Bearer is never normally asked, and they normally simply attend following the service at the church, but that she would of course send a formal invitation if this was needed. The RBL Chairman had then asked that the request go through him.

The Clerk confirmed that she would advise the Parish Council of this matter in its entirety.

The question was raised by a Councillor as to exactly who owns the Parish Memorial in the Churchyard, to which the Clerk advised that it is her understanding that it is owned by the 'Parish' and that the Parish Council is able to legally maintain this memorial on their behalf.

After discussing this matter at considerable length Members **AGREED** they did not wish to make any changes to the service at the North Weald Airfield Memorial / Norwegian Stone this year, and that there were Members of the Royal British Legion within the Parish Council who would be willing to make the announcements during the Service.

C21.103 ALLOTMENTS

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk has managed to appoint joint wardens for the Wheelers Farm Gardens and the Queens Road Allotments. This is on a trial basis (at their request), but it is hoped they will stay on permanently. Both are well liked Allotment Tenants and have been on site for a considerable time and have exemplary allotments. Councillors offered their thanks for these two individuals for taking this on.

C21.104 CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICES

Rev. Jaimee Summers has requested that a joint Carol Service between St Andrews Church, the School and the Parish Council, takes place on the Village Green in North Weald (by the Flagpole) and the Green adjacent to Wheelers Farm Gardens. The date proposed is 14th December, 6.30pm on the Green. The Parish Council has advised Rev. Summers that for safety reasons the attendance would be restricted to 50 people maximum, and the event would need to be cordoned off. It was felt that due to the location, residents of Wheeler's Farm Gardens should be specifically advised of the event. The School would provide mince pies and it was suggested that the Parish Council could provide a small glass of mulled wine for fifty people. The school choir would lead the carols and the Order of Service would be as follows:

Welcome & Introduction: Jaimee

*Carols: Silent Night ,Away In A Manger, We Three Kings, Hark the Herald,
O Little Town of Bethlehem, While Shepherds Watch
We Wish You a Merry Christmas.*

Cllr Wood advised that this was a great idea, however felt that it was being held in the wrong place, and that as far as she was aware word of mouth had already spread and she would be very surprise is the final number of attendees was anywhere near 50. It was **AGREED** that the Clerk would contact Rev. Summers and enquire as to how this would be managed on the night in order to determine if the event should indeed go ahead.

C21.105 CLIMATE CHANGE

Members will be aware of the EFDC Climate Change Consultation (link previously sent to all Councillors) and also the much wider COP26 Conference. It is felt that that now is the time that most local authorities embrace how they can support this initiative.

EFDC's narrative states that

A Climate Change Action Plan should aim to take forward the climate emergency declared in September 2019 and put into action the commitment to do everything within our power to become a carbon neutral district by 2030.

As well as helping the planet, climate action will also have positive impacts on our lifestyles by improving air quality, our health, nature, the economy and strain on our wallets. These actions can help to make Epping Forest a better place to live, work and play while also protecting valued local features such as the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation. Climate change will affect all of us and requires urgent action.

Members were advised that Climate Change will feature on the Parish Councils Environment Committee Agenda, where it will be discussed in much more detail.

C21.106 PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE

Councillors were advised that the PFO had looked at the legislative requirements of the Parish Council Website concerning accessibility. The PFO had emailed a summary report to Councillors earlier in the day setting out the full legal requirements and the Councils current position. Councillors **NOTED** that that it is a legal requirement that all Parish and Town Councils complied with accessibility requirements detailed within the report, and that the PFO had completed a review of other Councils in the area. There were a number of changes that were needed, and Councillors **AGREED** that this Council will aim to make the website as accessible as possible within its remit. Cllr Tyler mentioned that having a website in of itself had carbon knock-on effects.

C21.107 EFDC CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Councillors **AGREED** they would like to put forward David Jackman of Everything Epping Forest for Citizen of the Year, for providing a focussed and dedicated district new resource, and for the reason of keeping all parishioners and residents in Epping Forest District informed of current news and information which may be of interest to them.

Meeting closed: 8.10pm

Signed

Date