

The Annual Parish Assembly of the North Weald Bassett Parish Council, was held on Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023, in the Parish Hall, Weald Hall Lane, Thornwood Common at 7.15pm.

### ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MINUTES

**Parish Council Members Present:** Councillor Alan Buckley, Chairman  
Councillor Anne Grigg, Vice Chairman  
Councillors: N Bedford\*, T Blanks, Mrs P Etherington, Mrs S Hawkins,  
A Irvine, Mrs S Jackman MBE, R Spearman, A Tyler  
*\*Also District Councillor and Deputy Leader of EFDC*

**District Councillors Present:** C Whitbread\*\*, J McIvor\*, L Burrows, P Boulton  
*\* Also Essex County Councillors*  
*\*\* Also Leader of EFDC*

**Essex County Councillor Present:** (2) as listed above

**Public:** Fifty-Four  
**Police:** (0)  
**Press:** One

**In Attendance:** Susan De Luca – Clerk to the Council  
Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer  
Joanna Tyler – Senior Administrative Officer  
Pamela Euesden – Administrative Officer

The Chairman welcomed Members of the Public to the Annual Parish Assembly.

#### **1. Introduction of Councillors**

The Chairman introduced all Parish, District and County Councillors who were in attendance.

#### **2. To agree the minutes of the Parish Assembly held on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

The minutes were circulated and all those present **AGREED** that the minutes be approved as a true record.

#### **3. To consider any matters arising from the last meeting**

No matters were raised.

#### **4. To receive a report on the Council's activities from:**

**The Chairman of the Council: Councillor Alan Buckley**

The Chairman referred to the Annual Report which had been circulated at the meeting. The Chairman highlighted various items contained within the report which the Parish Council had been involved with.

#### **5. To receive a report from District Councillors**

**Councillor Chris Whitbread, representing Thornwood Common as a District Councillor and North Weald as a County Councillor, also Leader of EFDC** thanked the Parish Council for all the work that they have done throughout the year and for the support that they give. Cllr Whitbread advised that he is primarily a County Councillor and a District Councillor. Cllr Whitbread advised that his role at Essex County Council is the Cabinet Member for Finance. Cllr Whitbread advised that ECC had managed to keep council tax at 3.5% this year, he said that they could have raised it to 5% however, their considerations were with residents who are struggling. Cllr Whitbread advised that ECC have managed to put an additional £9million

into potholes and pavements which have been damaged over the winter. He said that following a recent announcement from the Government, an additional £5million in funding would be added to the repair fund for potholes. Cllr Whitbread said that the County's biggest spend is on Adult Social Care, with over £2million per day being spent.

Cllr Whitbread advised that he had been the leader of the District Council for over 10 years, and he was pleased to report that they are moving forward on a whole range of projects. Cllr Whitbread mentioned the Local Plan that had recently been passed, after 12 years in the making, and said that he is pleased this has now been achieved. Cllr Whitbread referred to a debate that had taken place in the previous week regarding the Local Plan and said that without one, the district would be open to development wherever people want to put it and said that the District now has protection up until 2033. Cllr Whitbread mentioned that EFDC had maintained its council house building programme with new houses being built. He said that it was very important for local people to get the first chance to apply, therefore residents have to live in the district for over 7 years to be eligible. Cllr Whitbread also mentioned that EFDC had taken another step forward on providing a new sports centre in Epping. The cost of construction is expected to be £33 million. He said that it is hoped that the new centre will open in 2025, with a new swimming pool and all the things expected of a first-class sports centre which will be of benefit to everyone in the District. Cllr Whitbread apologised for the problems that residents had experienced with waste and recycling collections. He said that the contractor is back on track now and commented that EFDC are to order a new fleet of waste disposal lorries ready for a new waste disposal contract to be procured in the next couple of years.

**Councillor Nigel Bedford, Parish Councillor for Village Ward and also Deputy Leader of EFDC** advised that he had been tasked with the Local Plan as well as the North Weald Master Plan. He commented that the Masterplan is going very well and for those people in the village who wanted flying to continue they had managed to contain that. Cllr Bedford commented that EFDC is supporting the flying, supporting intensification of some of the industrial sites to generate more revenue which goes towards keeping council tax down in the district. Cllr Bedford referred to rumours that there is to be a refuse centre sited on the Airfield and reiterated that this was not going to happen. He said that there will be a lorry park for 33 lorries, traffic movements will be once in the morning and returning in the afternoon, with emissions being reduced to an absolute minimum. and that be a new refuse centre on the Airfield, it is lorry park, there will be 33 lorries, emissions will be reduced to an absolute minimum and there will be a maintenance shed being built to keep vehicles running.

**Councillor Les Burrows, representing Thornwood Common Ward** said that he is a member of the Cabinet in charge of Efficiencies and Reviews, plus Grants. He has been looking at the museum and Membership Training, making sure councillors are up to date.

**Councillor Peter Bolton, representing North Weald (Village) Ward,** commented that his fellow councillors had said most of what need to be said. Cllr Bolton mentioned North Weald Airfield and said that it is an unlicensed Airfield, which means you can't fly jumbo jets from there. He commented that, in his opinion, to develop it as an airfield would be a disaster and said that to make it into a second Stansted would be crazy, it would not be financially viable, and it is not needed. Cllr Bolton said that he wanted to reassure people that it would stay as a nice little airfield which will not cause much disruption.

**Councillor Jaymey McIvor, representing North Weald (Village) Ward (also an Essex County Councillor)** thanked the Parish Council and commented that, as a County Councillor who has 18 parishes within his area, North Weald Bassett Parish Council is a fine example as to how they should operate. Cllr McIvor commented that it had been just over a year since Russia invaded Ukraine and he just wanted to thank people who had been very supportive to with his projects and in showing solidarity to the people of the Ukraine.

Cllr Mclvor mentioned Ride London and advised that he had been involved with this at County level and said that if anyone had any concerns regarding access arrangements or support for business, to contact him direct.

Cllr Mclvor mentioned residents' concerns regarding the problems experienced with waste collections and said that he would like to thank EFDC Officers and Members of the Cabinet who had been very supportive in communicating all of the work that has been going on behind the scenes.

Cllr Mclvor said that he would like to record his thanks to everyone who has been supporting the various community initiatives that have been taking place in North Weald. He referred to Epping Ongar Railway's Memory Train and the Community Growth Garden supported by EFDC Community Development. Cllr Mclvor also mentioned a recent performance by North Weald children on the theme of Kings & Queens where they entertained older citizens and the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Cllr Mclvor said he would also like to record his thanks as it is his fourth year in office since being elected as the youngest ever District Councillor and he very much hoped to continue serving the parish in the future.

**6. To receive a report from County Councillors – as above.**

**7. To receive questions from the public concerning matters over which the Parish Council has control or some influence**

The Chairman invited members of the public to ask questions, reminding them that they needed to be listed on the Electoral Roll. The Chairman advised that if the council was able to answer questions straight away, it would do, however, if not, names and addresses would be taken and a response would be sent. The Chairman reminded members of the public that they could also post questions in the Question Box, and a written reply would be sent.

Mr Jimmy Waters, Upland Road – had a question concerning the Thornwood Common village field as follows: "The village field was given to Thornwood in the 1861 Enclosure Commission Confirmation, 'for exercise and recreation for the inhabitants' by Commissioner Chapman. It did not account for Metal Detecting or Dog Fouling. Is the Field now protected with a modern Public Space Protection Order? If not, can the Parish Council apply for one?" The Clerk confirmed that the field is a registered Village Green and said that she would investigate Mr Waters question further and would respond accordingly. Mr Waters commented that if the Parish Council could apply for the Order, it would give much more power legally. The Chairman advised Mr Waters that other questions that he had submitted had been passed to Councillor Chris Whitbread for further contact.

Mr Waters briefly mentioned Speed Watch and said that more volunteers were being sought. He encouraged anyone interested to email the coordinator, whose contact details had been included in the Annual Report and to also look out for information on the Thornwood Common playing field noticeboard. Mr Waters thanked Cllr Mrs Shirley Hawkins for agreeing to display the notice.

Claire Clegg, Chair of Thornwood Action Group commented that although she had 3 questions that she had wanted to ask, she appreciated that she may only be able to ask one. Mrs Clegg commented that it was lovely to finally see the Deer Warning signs along Lower Forest Road, however she asked why the signs do not activate until a driver breaks the speed limit. Mrs Clegg said that they do not activate until a vehicle reaches 50 mph and asked if it would be possible for the signs to be programmed to activate at a lower limit. Cllr Chris Whitbread confirmed that he would take this matter up with enquiries at Essex County Council.

Mr Nick Born confirmed his electorate number and said that his question alluded to both the Neighbourhood Plan and various plans put forward by Epping Forest District Council and said that he had

noted that there was no mention of any historic monuments. Mr Born said that we, in North Weald, are very fortunate to have both the Redoubt, which he advised is listed as an Ancient Monument, and said that public could not get to it as access is very bad, and also Ongar Radio Station, which is deteriorating. Mr Born said that he is a little bit worried that in the plans put forward by the parish and by EFDC, there is no mention of these great assets that we have got in the village and he wanted to know if the Parish Council would consider a feasibility project to do some sort of redevelopment work in association with the Historic Monuments Commission. Mr Born suggested that the council could get the commission to look at road and access arrangement and said that it could be a project to open the monuments up to the people, however, he did say that it would not be a "Disney type project". Mr Born said that there is a lot of information and that he had been in contact with Marconi at Chelmsford. Mr Born said that Marconi have "pots of gold" which they are willing to invest and would very much like to do some sort of joined up project with a view to a complete refurbishment and rebuilding. Mr Born said it is a long way off, but the council might want to look at a project and look at a feasibility study to see what we want to do with it. He added that it is such a shame to see it just lying there doing nothing and commented that the Redoubt in particular has a wealth of history attached to it and is a tremendous resource which could be put to good use.

The Clerk said that the Principal Finance Officer may wish to answer Mr Born's question. However, firstly, advised that the land referred to did in fact belong to Peer Group, not the Parish Council, and said that there is nothing the Parish Council can do unless Peer Group are interested in it. The Clerk confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan had not been completed yet and commented that in all the Neighbourhood Plan Meetings she had been present at, when the Redoubt and Radio Station had been mentioned, the group had spoken about dealing with those as listed monuments. The PFO said that as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, funding of £3,000 was received via Locality, and with part of that funding, a Heritage & Character Assessment for North Weald Bassett was commissioned. The Redoubt and all the listed buildings and monuments are included in that document. The PFO commented that the Redoubt is recognised as a potential asset for the village and said that the last time a quote (from around 20 years ago) was received to look at getting the building up to a reasonable standard, costs mentioned were in the region of £1million. The PFO said that there are so many recognised assets (in the parish) and that is something that the Neighbourhood Plan will look at, how can they improve it, what is the possibility of improving it in the future and reiterated that is the reason why it is so important that the Neighbourhood Plan exists.

The Chairman referred to discussions that had taken place regarding development of North Weald Airfield and said that the information received had mentioned the retention of all the historic monuments located there. Mr Born mentioned that there had been rumours of EFDC demolishing the Tower and moving it to another part of the Airfield. The Chairman advised that the last he had heard was that the Tower was to stay where it is, perhaps being turned into a café. The Chairman commented that he would like to see the Tower, for example, linked in with the Airfield Museum and perhaps Epping Ongar Railway and other monuments on the Airfield and said that if these are developed and advertised properly it would bring a lot of people to the area. Mr Born suggested that it could be a place for the Parish Council to be based and the Clerk confirmed that the question had been asked.

The Clerk mentioned that she had a copy of the Supplementary Agenda for EFDC's Cabinet Meeting and said that there are details regarding the Tower contained within the agenda and asked Mr Born if he would like to view the document following the meeting. Mr Born asked if he could view the agenda online and if so, would the Clerk provide the website details. The Clerk confirmed that she would provide the information after the meeting had closed.

The Chairman offered Mrs Clegg the opportunity to ask a second question.

Mrs Clegg said that her question referred to the Upper Clapton Rugby Club. She said that the club is in the middle of an application for building more houses on their land to supplement various things they want to do at the Rugby Club. Mrs Clegg indicated that it is Green Belt land, they have already built on Green Belt land, and she said that she believed that the application had been supported by District Councillor representatives. Mrs Clegg said that her concern is that if the club is currently unable to function as it wishes, it should not be allowed to build on Green Belt land merely to carry on functioning and to extend. Mrs Clegg commented that it would be a good start if the Rugby Club complied with the conditions promised in the first application and said that the old club house had still not been removed and they had still not improved the car parking to the extent that the club was asked to and yet the application appears to be going through with support. Mrs Clegg said that residents in Upland Road were not happy about it and commented that if EFDC were to ask most people in the village if they want Green Belt land built on, they would be saying no.

District Councillor Nigel Bedford responded to the question, commenting that the support for the Rugby Club had been enormous and said that is what had convinced District Councillors to support the project. Cllr Bedford said that the Rugby Club had realised from an early start that they didn't put in the correct bids for their first lot of funding, therefore they had to make another application which was looked at very closely by District Councillors, who found that there were special reasons and planning permission was granted. Cllr Bedford advised that one of the key things in granting the planning permission was that the Rugby Club must complete the work outstanding before they move on to stage 2. Cllr Bedford mentioned that there is also going to be a function room and said that it was his understanding that this had already been approved. He also said that some of the lighting is being changed. Cllr Bedford reiterated that it had been a very difficult decision and commented that EFDC do not like losing Green Belt, however one of the arguments for it is if there are special circumstances. He said that allowing permission would benefit the residents, the club have to make sure that there is adequate parking, demolish the old buildings on site, landscape and map out a new car park area, only then can they do the other works that they want to do. Cllr Bedford said that there is a structured approach to the way that the club can do the work so that it doesn't impact on the residents. Cllr Bedford reiterated that by allowing planning permission, the sheds will be taken down, the area tidied up and new housing will shield what is behind and be of benefit to the residents. Cllr Bedford said that District Councillors have to make tough decisions and can't please everyone all of the time. He said that, in this case, councillors felt that the residents would benefit in the end when the work is completed, it will get the cars off the road with adequate parking and will provide a wealth of experience and training for young people in the Rugby Club. Mrs Clegg asked Cllr Bedford what the special considerations were this time. Cllr Bedford advised that they are all documented in the notice.

## **8. Presentation of Citizen of the Year Awards**

The Citizen of the Year Award Winners were announced by Councillor Tyler, with the awards handed out by the Chairman:

**Community Champion Award – this was awarded to Linda Little for being a good Samaritan.** *Linda is always ready to help others. For several years she has been collecting and delivering newspapers to a regular number of residents who are unable to do so themselves. Linda helps neighbours by doing their shopping. She is always ready to help others.*

**Special Coordination Award – this was awarded to Joanna Maliniak for co-ordinating support from the North Weald community for aid for the people of the Ukraine.**

*In early March 2022 Joanna made an enormous difference to the people of the Ukraine. She brought together the people of North Weald, displaying its supportive community. Joanna asked for urgent medical supplies and these arrived in abundance from the community and from North Weald Chemist, Dhruve. Joanna was meticulous in her organisation, not only thanking everyone but reassuring donors by showing photographs of the medical supplies arriving at their Ukrainian destination.*

**North Weald Village Hall Champion Award – this was awarded to Margaret Mulliner.** *Margaret has worked tirelessly to keep North Weald Village Hall functioning. Margaret's work for the village also includes the Senior Citizens monthly Ploughman's Lunch and North Weald WI. Margaret runs the bar for the Royal British Legion on the first Sunday of the month. She is a stalwart of the village.*

**Environmental Award – this was awarded to Roger Anthony.** *Roger contacted the Parish Council following the decision to create a new woodland area at Weald Common. Roger kindly donated 7 oak tree saplings for inclusion in the planting plan which had grown in his garden from an oak tree believed to have once been in the grounds of Bluemans Farm. Roger visited the site with the Chairman to select specific locations in which to plant the "North Weald Oaks".*

**Special Community Champion Award – this was awarded to Colin Quilter.** *Colin carried out renovations on the Norwegian Stone and the Parish War Memorial prior to the Rededication Services in June last year. The special services would not have been able to have taken place without Colin's generosity as he undertook the work free of charge.*

**Special Lifetime Award – this was awarded to Derek Speller.** *Derek has been a tenant at the Queen's Road allotment site for over 55 years. He made the decision to end the tenancy at the end of February. His journey as an allotment tenant, sharing what he has learned along the way, has been an inspiration to others.*

#### **GROUP AWARDS**

Two teams were awarded joint winners of the **Business Organisations of the Year Award:**

**Kevin Hebden and Team at Thornwood Grounds Maintenance.** *Kevin and his team at Thornwood Grounds Maintenance are contractors for the Parish Council. However, they always go above and beyond, responding often at very short notice and in unsociable hours to undertaken emergency repairs, which are, more often than not, Health and Safety issues. The team often experience abusive behaviour from individuals when carrying out work on behalf of the Parish Council, all of which is handled with diplomacy. The Parish Council is very fortunate to have Kevin and his team carrying out work around the parish.*

**Dhruve Vasani and Team – North Weald Chemists.** *Dhruve as a pharmacist goes the extra mile, he is never too busy to help, offer advice and listen. All the assistants are the same, ready and willing to help, smile and chat, they have knowledge of all the items in the chemist. Likewise, Victoria is the same, full of knowledge, kindness and care. Also Pretty is kind, helpful and caring. This group of people make a vast difference to our lives and should get the praise they deserve.*

#### **YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR GROUP AWARDS**

**The Taekwondo Group based at the Parish Hall, were awarded Runner-up in this category.** *The group is led by Michael Barford, who does quite a lot towards raising awareness and the prevention of anti-social behaviour for youngsters, helping to encourage discipline and independence. Weekly group sessions are open to all.*

**The winners of the award for Young Citizen of the Year Group goes to the Eco-Warriors from St Andrew's Primary School.** *The Eco-Warriors were keen to get involved with the Parish Council's Tree Planting Project at Weald Common. The children visited the new woodland area in January to plant the final 40 trees. Following the visit, Deputy Headteacher Benjamin Sharp said: "It was great to see the children so excited to go and tell other children about the project when they got back to school and to hear the children discussing how they can watch the trees grow over many years to come. The project is going to bring so much to these children and I'm sure their families in the future."*

**THE OVERALL WINNER OF THE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR 2022 was awarded to the Eco-Warriors from St Andrew's Primary School.**

The Chairman announced that Cllr Mrs Anne Grigg would not be seeking re-election as a Parish Councillor in the Elections taking place in May. The Chairman presented Cllr Mrs Grigg with an award in acknowledgement of her commitment to the parish.

Finally, the Chairman thanked the Parish Council Team, and his fellow councillors for their support throughout the past year. The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and invited all those present to join him in some refreshments and to also take the opportunity to ask councillors any individual questions.

**Meeting Closed: 8.32pm**