



MINUTES

Meeting: ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL **Date:** 10th May 2023

Time: 7.30PM

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT:

Councillors (12) Cllr Buckley (Chairman), Cllr Spearman, Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Mrs S Jackman MBE, Cllr Tyler*, Cllr Clegg, Cllr Blanks, Cllr Bedford, Cllr Stroud, Cllr Ms Wood, Cllr Kinnear, Cllr Born

**for part of the meeting only*

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca – Parish Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Financial Officer

Members of the Public (1) – EFDC Cllr Burrows

Members of the Press (1)

C23.001 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Mrs Jackman **PROPOSED** Cllr Buckley as Chairman, the proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Spearman. There being no other nominations, Cllr Buckley was duly elected by way of unanimous vote as Chairman of North Weald Bassett Parish Council for the current Municipal Year, following which the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of the Chairman of the Council was duly executed.

C23.002 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Buckley **PROPOSED** Cllr Mrs Hawkins as Vice Chairman, the proposal was **SECONDED** by Cllr Blanks. There being no other nominations, Cllr Mrs Hawkins was duly elected by way of unanimous vote as Vice Chairman of North Weald Bassett Parish Council for the current Municipal Year, following which the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of the Vice Chairman of the Council was duly executed.

[Cllr Tyler arrived]

C23.003 CO-OPTION OF COUNCILLOR, VILLAGE WARD

Councillors **AGREED** to co-opt Cllr Mark Stroud for Village Ward.

C23.003a NEW COUNCILLORS

The Chairman welcomed the two new Councillors to the Parish Council – Cllr Nicholas Born, and Cllr Colin Kinnear.

C23.004 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (2)

Apologies received from Cllr Etherington and Cllr Irvine. ECC Cllr Chris Whitbread had also given his apologies.

C23.005 OTHER ABSENCES (0)

None.

C23.006 MINUTES

Councillors **AGREED** the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 17th April 2023.

C23.007 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman welcomed EFDC Cllr Burrows, and reminded Councillors that Cllr Bedford was also a District Councillor for a different ward, and took the opportunity to congratulate them both on their recent District Council election.

C23.008 REPORT OF THE CLERK

The Clerk advised that the following points were a brief resume of items staff had been working on over the last few months, specifically for new Councillors to see or ask any questions on.

- Weald Common - North Weald Bowls Club – Defibrillator - Open Spaces – Allotments - Environmental /Open Space Committee - Move of Office back into Library - Cemetery matters - Administrative matters - Parish Hall at Thornwood - Highways/Fly Tipping - Liaising with Peer Group

The Clerk also advised she had received an email from PC Andy Cook earlier in the day providing some crime figures, details of which were read out at the meeting. The Clerk advised that the next Coffee with Cops would be Friday 12th May 10am to 12pm at the Thornwood Common Parish Hall, and details had been placed on social media and the parish notice boards.

C23.009 REPORTS AND MEMBER REPORTS

The following reports were **NOTED**:

- Chairman's Report** – The Chairman reminded all Councillors that where possible providing written reports which could be circulated with the agenda enables Councillors the chance to fully digest the report prior to the meeting. The Chairman provided a brief update on Weald Common Tree Planting, advising that the Councils Grounds Maintenance contract had finished works earlier in the day, with all the necessary re-mulching having been completed. The Chairman himself had spent around 2 hours hammering back in the tree stakes, and it was looking like around 90% uptake in the trees. The Office staff and Chairman will now work towards the final plan around the inaugural beach, with a quotation is awaited for the three information boards, and the stump procured by the burial park which will be sunk into the ground along with the jubilee plaque, before a formal official opening.
- Vice Chairman's Report** – No report
- District & County Councillors Reports** – No reports.
- Parish Councillors** – Cllr Blanks provided a report on Qualis, stating that a new company was formed in December 2022 called Qualis Property Solutions, however Qualis Management and the new company were going to swap names. Qualis Property Solutions had only one director, whereas most of the original Qualis companies had about 10 directors, with some Councillors, Officers, and independent people. Cllr Blanks stated that the Section 151 Officer was due shortly to advise EFDC Councillors about this. The Chairman stated that he wasn't sure this was part of the remit of the Parish Council, suggesting the Council should wait until EFDC Councillors had been informed. Cllr Blanks stated that he understood this, however Qualis was increasingly becoming a part of our every day lives. Cllr Blanks stated that people should be interested as there seems to be a lack of control. The Clerk stated that she had spoken with the Chairman, and that this was a District Council matter and potentially the Parish Council would be muddying the waters, and there didn't seem to be a power or duty to act in this regard. The Clerk further stated that she felt this could definitely be something that a residents association could take on, and wondered if the Loughton Residents Association had an input. Cllr Blanks stated that most

of their members were Councillors at EFDC. The Clerk reiterated that this may be best placed with a residents association could challenge EFDC with, asking where they were spending their money and why. Cllr Blanks advised that this was an issue as Qualis was a private company and nobody other than their shareholders, which was EFDC, had a right to ask questions in public, although it did seem as though District Councillors were asking questions more frequently about it as they were concerned. Cllr Blanks stated that he saw it as his duty to keep the Council advised, as EFDC will not.

Cllr Born asked Cllr Blanks if he could detail the company registration number when referring to Qualis so it could be looked in to, as it seemed to be quite entwined. The Clerk stated that she fully understood that residents in the district may be concerned where their council tax was going, however the Parish Council could not take up the whole banner. Cllr Blanks stated that he understood but didn't necessarily agree. The Clerk stated that Cllr Blanks was already speaking with Deloittes concerning EFDC. Cllr Bedford stated that District Councillors do raise questions, and that he had the information in front of him concerning Qualis Property Solutions and that the information provided by Cllr Blanks was incorrect as there were in fact 8 directors appointed and 1 secretary. Cllr Blanks stated that the property name had changed, to which Cllr Bedford stated this was recorded in the document in front of him where it states 'formally known as'. Cllr Blanks stated that he was sure there were many people in North Weald who would like to ask questions, as this name was being promoted by the Council, and that he was concerned North Weald Bassett Parish Council could look foolish to the electorate. Cllr Bedford stated that he didn't feel that was Parish Council business. The Chairman expressed concern that the discussion around Qualis could take up all Parish Council at this meeting, and the Clerk advised she would be happy to meet with Cllr Blanks to discuss Qualis further.

Cllr Clegg gave a brief report on Community Speedwatch, advising that a speedwatch check had been held in the newly agreed location of Weald Bridge Road, and that another event was scheduled for the following Wednesday in the early morning hours, to which the police had been invited to attend. Janet Wiley, the Community Speedwatch Administrator for the County had called to check that those approved locations were still being used. Cllr Clegg confirmed the new volunteer would be trained once the dates are set. Cllr Tyler took the opportunity to thank Cllr Clegg for visiting Church Lane and assessing it for suitability for Speedwatch, however due to the 60mph speed limit in this area it could not be done. Cllr Bedford suggested that perhaps the speedwatch team could hold a check in the High Road in North Weald, along the stretch where the speed camera is but checking speed in the opposite direction, possibly somewhere near School Green Lane as somebody had recently been knocked over at this location. Cllr Bedford advised of the two approved locations in North Weald – Skips Corner and outside the post office, stating that checking speed at these locations during the peak periods between 7.45am and 8.45am doesn't work as the school buses inevitably lower the speeds of vehicles. Speeding from the Talbot direction at Skips Corner was an issue though. Cllr Ms Wood advised that the Police did conduct speed checks near School Green Lane.

- e) **Queens Hall Charity Report** – Cllr Ms Wood advised that the AGM was due to be held soon, and that it is possible some new trustees would be coming on board. One trustee would be leaving as they were moving out of the area, but that in general the hall was ticking along well.
- f) **Neighbourhood Plan Report** – (reported under item 11) – It was noted that a few meetings ago the Council agreed to continue with progressing the Neighbourhood Plan, and that all Councillors would be actively involved in it. The PFO advised that the place of Neighbourhood Plans was

being questioned by many organisations across the country, and as such the draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan had been sent to the planning consultant previously used by this Council to conduct a review against the EFDC newly made Local Plan, and current national policy, to gauge which are in compliance. This report would then be provided to Councillors so they could get a broad feel for the types of policies that would be included in the Neighbourhood Plan, so the way forward could be determined.

- h) **Highways Report** – No report from County, however Cllr Bedford advised there was a pothole outside Norway House that needed looking at as it's full of water and hard to identify. Cllr Ms Wood stated it would be nice if the potholes near the M11 would be filled. Cllr Mrs Jackman advised that the A414 near Canes Lane also needed addressing, to which the Chairman advised that works on these were being undertaken.

C23.010 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Spearman declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the Local Plan.

C23.011 MEMBERSHIPS OF COMMITTEES

Councillors reviewed the Committee members list. The Clerk advised that Councillors normally stay on the committees unless they actually want to change, and offered a reminder regarding planning that this is done on Zoom unless there is availability at the hall. The following was **AGREED** or **NOTED**:

- Cllr Kinnear to go on Planning.
- All members were automatically a member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, so Cllr Kinnear and Cllr Born would be added.
- No news regarding Emergency planning.
- Cllr Born and Cllr Spearman to go on Environmental and Open Spaces.
- Allotment Sub Committee is Cllr Mrs Hawkins and Cllr Spearman.
- Parish Liaison remains as three ward Councillors.
- Cllr Kinnear to go on Queens Hall Charity.
- Cllr Bedford to go on Forest Liaison, which is expected to start up again shortly, and he already deals with Corporation of London.
- Cllr Born to go on Transport Liaison.
- Local Liaison remains Chair and Vice Chair, and Cllr Mrs Jackman as she is on the Executive Committee.
- Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – Agreed a few meetings ago that all Councillors would form part of this group.
- Personnel – two ex-officio officers which have to be Chairman and Vice Chairman, and the Clerk advised it's normally the senior members, i.e. long term Councillors, at present being Cllr Clegg, Cllr Spearman and Cllr Mrs Jackman.

C23.012 DATES OF MEETINGS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

Members noted the dates of the forthcoming Parish Council meeting as previously circulated. The Clerk advised that meetings were normally the first Monday of each month.

C23.013 REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The following representations were **AGREED**:

| OUTSIDE BODIES | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Outside Body | Representation Council year 2023/2024 |

| | |
|--|--|
| Parish Passenger Transport Forum | Cllr Born |
| Norway House | Chairman of Parish Council |
| North Weald Village Hall | Cllr Bedford |
| Epping Forest District Council Committees | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Epping Forest Branch of the Association of Local Councils – two reps (clerks may also attend these meetings) | Cllr Mrs S Jackman & Chairman, & Clerk – In the Absence of Cllr Jackman – Cllr T Blanks has attended as a substitution |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Councils' Liaison Committee – two reps – (clerks may also attend these meetings) | As Above |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint Standards Committee – one rep (but only if your council is a member of this) | Cllr Bedford |

Queens Hall Charity

In the Governing Document the Term of Office is for one year.

PC Appointed 2023/2024

- Dawn Wood – Councillor, Administrator & Treasurer
- Colin Kinnear – Councillor
- Stuart Greenhill- Resident

Groups

- Vince Current – NWCC - Cricket
- Diane Archer- Bowls
- Sarah – Badminton

Cllr Ms Wood advised that there were two local residents who may be interested in taking up posts as Trustee, and that the Red School had confirmed they would continue, however there had been no response from UKA.

C23.014 REGISTRATION OF COUNCILLORS INTERESTS

Members were reminded that they should review their Interests on a regular basis, and as such the Clerk is advising Members as such on behalf of EFDCs Monitoring Officer. Any updated forms must be submitted to EFDC within 28 days of a Councillor taking Office and that this was a legal requirement. **NOTED** that Councillors should submit their completed forms to the Clerk who will then forward on to District, as these forms were also included on the Parish Council website.

C23.015 APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS

Noted this item would be on the June agenda for approval, following the Internal Audit visit in May.

C23.016 REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

Councillors noted that the Council has a duty to ensure that the financial management of the body is adequate and effective and that the body has a sound system of internal control. The PFO advised that Cllr Blanks reviews the Cashbooks, bank reconciliations and bank statements once every three months, and that these are given to the internal auditor to review. In addition, the Council has a three-tier system of internal control for payments where either the PFO or Clerk can

instruct payments with the bank, but that two Councillors needed to authorise this. Councillors **AGREED** they were happy with the internal financial controls.

C23.017 APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

Council **AGREED** the appointment of Auditing Solutions as the Parish Councils Internal Auditor for the year 2023-2024.

C23.018 PARISH COUNCIL INSURANCE

Councillors noted that the Parish Councils insurance was due for renewal on 1st June 2023. The Clerk had obtained a number of quotes including BHIB and Zurich, with the Councils current provider – Zurich – coming in more favourable. Members noted that a full copy of the policy documentation was available. Cllr Bedford asked if that now Weald Common had been planted with trees, this Council may need to make provision in 10 years time or so for a tree survey, to which the PFO confirmed that an annual tree risk assessment was conducted of all trees on Parish Council owned land, and that in time these trees would form part of that. Cllr Bedford asked if the insurance policy covered the Council for Weald Common, to which the PFO confirmed that the Council has public liability insurance for any of our open spaces. The Chairman asked if this extended to the play areas, etc, to which it was confirmed it did. Councillors **AGREED** to continue with Zurich for 2023/2024 at a cost of £2,883.91, which was a very small increase on the prior year.

C23.019 ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS

Members **AGREED** they were happy to have some of their documentation where relevant, served on them for Parish Council and other Meetings, electronically by reason of efficiency.

C23.020 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

The Localism Act 2011, Chapter 1 of Part 1, Sections 1-8 has provided local authorities with the General Power of Competence (GPC), subject to certain criteria being met. The GPC was brought into force by S1, 961 The Localism Act 2011 (Consequential Amendments) Order 2012 on 28th March 2012, the Governments intention being to better enable local councils to take on their enhanced role and allow them to do the things that they have previously been unable to do under their existing powers. The GPC gives eligible local councils “the power to do anything that individuals generally may do” as long as they do not break other laws. It is intended to be a power of first, not last resort.

The Clerk advised that this Parish Council was an ‘eligible council’ as the Clerk is a Qualified Clerk and holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration, the Clerk has completed the training in the exercise of the General Power of Competence, and this Council fulfils the Electoral Mandate by having at least two thirds of the Members of the Council Elected. Councillors **RESOLVED** the eligibility of this Council to hold and use the GPC.

The Clerk stated that further to discussions earlier in the meeting, it may be that this power could be used should this Council wish to address the Qualis matter and expend time, money and staffing resources on it. The Clerk stated that if so, she would talk with the auditor, and would residents want the Council to allocate funds and time to this. Cllr Blanks stated that it doesn’t matter what this Council does as far as Qualis was concerned as it’s a private company and you cannot ask questions of a private company, and that this was part of the reason EFDC formed the Qualis companies so they don’t have to answer questions.

C23.021 CONFIRMATION OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO RAISE AND LOWER FLAG

The Clerk explained that the flag on the village green was required to be changed and raised roughly 6 times a year, and this Council needed people willing to put themselves forward to do this. Both Cllr Tyler and Cllr Bedford had each undertaken this for a year, with the Chairman as substitute. The next date was 17th May with the Norwegian flag needing to be raised for Norway day. Cllr Stroud put himself forward to raise it on 17th May. The Clerk advised she held one key, and Cllr Bedford the other. Cllr Bedford advised that when the Queens died, somebody had tampered with the flag and caused damage to the top plastic section and that this would need looking at. Cllr Tyler elaborated stating that people thought it was disrespectful to leave the flag up at this time, however there was a very strict protocol as to when the flag needed to be raised and lowered, and the Parish Council followed this procedure fully. Cllr Ms Wood suggested a list of dates on which the flag should be raised and lowered should be circulated to Councillors, who could then put themselves forward if they were available. This was **AGREED**.

C23.022 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.

C23.023 GOING FORWARD PARISH COUNCIL PREMISES - NORTH WEALD METHODIST CHURCH

Councillors **NOTED** that the Clerk was awaiting a response from HAEBEA. It was **AGREED** to contact the registered address on the land registry. It was **AGREED** to continue pursuing this matter.

C23.024 NORTH WEALD RADIO STATION BOWLS CLUB

Councillors **NOTED** this matter was with the solicitors and was being progressed. The Clerk stated she had received a call that morning from a resident stating children were vandalising the site, however no further details were provided. Cllr Ms Wood stated that when the Queens Hall had collected some crockery from the site, she had seen lots of historic memorabilia, and that it would be terrible if this was vandalised.

C23.025 GOING FORWARD PREMISES FOR PARISH COUNCIL OFFICES

Members stated they were disappointed with the lack of response from ECC regarding the possibility of Parish Council moving back into the library. It was **AGREED** to write to ECC Cllr Whitbread. Cllr Mrs Jackman suggested going directly to Kevin Bently, Leader of the Council. Cllr Ms Wood advised there was space at the Queens Hall. Cllr Born suggested the Council could look for commercial premises in North Weald.

Meeting closed 20.47

Signed

Date